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HARRIET MARTINEAU
AN ESSAY IN COMPREHENSION

by Theodora Bonanquet

THE HASLEWOOD BOOKS



HARRIET MARTINEAU

From the portrait by Sir R. Evans in the National
Portrait Gallery

HARRIET MARTINEAU

An Essay
in
Comprehension

by
THEODORA BOSANQUET

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PREFACE

HARRIET MARTINEAU drew her own portrait in the *Autobiography* published the year after her death with a complementary volume of *Memorials* supplied by her devoted American friend, Maria Weston Chapman. The self-portrait, a vigorous piece of work, was drawn to justify rather than to reveal the subject. The *Memorials* are an anthology of the tributes consciously provided by her admirers, with extracts from her letters and journals, all bound together in the warm clasp of loyal and undiscriminating friendship. The volume has been sufficiently criticised, but there is no reason to suppose that it is not what Miss Martineau wanted and expected. She herself asked her friend to complete her biography. They discussed the material to be used, at intervals, for about twenty years. It is in any case an invaluable aid to any reader interested in Miss Martineau's career, for the fragments preserved in the amber of Mrs. Chapman's *Memorials* are almost all that we have or can hope to have of her correspondence and

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diaries. Few of Harriet Martineau's friends were bold enough to disobey her command that they should burn all the letters they had ever had from her, and those who did were prohibited by her Will from making any public use of their hoards.

A better proportioned biography, by Mrs. Fenwick Miller, was published in 1884. It is particularly valuable for the account of the latter part of Harriet Martineau's life, a period not touched in the *Autobiography* and inadequately treated by Mrs. Chapman. For the earlier part of the life history, Mrs. Miller, more concerned to emphasise the warm humanity of her subject than her rare intellectual powers, adopted the dangerous course of raking Miss Martineau's fiction to fill the gaps in the *Autobiography*. The appearance of the book provoked Dr. James Martineau, Harriet's younger brother, to compose a long letter to the *Daily News*, contradicting several of Mrs. Miller's statements. His interesting letter, which is printed at the end of this volume, should be read with some reserve of judgment, for both brother and sister were endowed with vivid imagination and were better advocates than recorders. It will be noticed that James Martineau's account of the relation between his sister Harriet and his friend Worthington, if accepted, makes the fact of their ultimate engagement less comprehensible than the story of the *Auto-*

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biography ; his assurance that his mother expressed prompt and full sympathy with Harriet's desire to earn her living by literary work in London is not borne out by the letter written to Mrs. Martineau on this occasion by her daughter (*Memorials*, p. 43) ; and his assertion that his review of the *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development* contained nothing that could reasonably hurt or offend his sister will hardly be allowed by anyone who has read the review in question. Nor is the account he gives in this letter of the breach with his sister altogether the same as that given in the memorandum quoted in his *Life and Letters*.

Mrs. W. L. Courtney, in *Free-Thinkers of the Nineteenth Century*, appraises Harriet Martineau's intellectual position with clear-sighted justice. There is perhaps very little excuse for anything further to be written, and all that I have tried to do is to relate Miss Martineau's life and opinions, and her continual, if sometimes eccentric, progress towards the final phase of her remarkable career, to the personal influences which so clearly and powerfully affected her. The memories of the *Autobiography* have been supplemented as much as possible by reference to the contemporary records of the men and women who knew her. Her personality was too striking to be left undescribed, and although the descriptions are very varied, they

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are not so inconsistent as to be incredible. For the most part, these witnesses have been left to relate their impressions in their own words, since their phrases are as characteristic of themselves as of their subject, and no reader accustomed to the typography of English fiction is likely to find quotation marks a hindrance to perusal.

Among the friends who have shared my interest in Harriet Martineau, I want particularly to thank Mrs. Edward Cleghorn, whose researches in Boston and Charleston have brought to light several significant features of the American tour. And I should like to thank Miss Constantia Maxwell for a series of explanatory notes on Miss Martineau's visit to Ireland, Miss Myra Curtis for a lucid analysis of Mr. Atkinson's philosophy, and the late Dr. James Martineau's executors for permission to republish his letter.

The portrait of Mrs. Chapman is reproduced by the courtesy of the Boston Public Library. I regret very much that I have not been able to obtain a portrait of Mr. Atkinson.

THEODORA BOSANQUET.

October 7th, 1927.

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I

THE ATHENS OF ENGLAND

“ **C**OD, as the Arabs say, has given to every people a Prophet (or Poet) in its own speech: and behold now Unitarian mechanical Formalism was to have its Poetess too; and stragglings of genius were to spring up through that like grass through a Macadam highway.”

So Thomas Carlyle wrote in 1838 to his American friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson. The application of the Arab proverb to Miss Harriet Martineau amused and pleased him. He forgot that he had used it in writing to the same correspondent a year earlier, when he had added that she was one of the strangest phenomena, “a genuine little Poetess, buckrammed, swathed like a mummy into Socinian and Political Economy formulas; and yet verily alive inside of that.”

Carlyle had a penetrating eye. By the time he was writing his impressions of his new London acquaintance to Emerson, who had met Miss Martineau in America, the buckram casing was so

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stout and so stiff that few were able to see through it. An impulsive, susceptible temperament might lead her into a diversity of adventures, but her changes of position were so quickly concealed behind the mountainous earthworks of explanation thrown up to defend them that they were hardly noticed before her unorthodox recovery from illness in 1843 and the atheistical *Letters* of 1851 brought Harriet Martineau's name into more questionable repute than her earlier voluminous activities. But the temperament was there from the beginning.

The beginning was at Norwich, where the Poet or Prophet of the Unitarians, who was to become the Apostle of the Positivists, was born in 1802. Norwich is a cathedral city, but Bishop Bathurst was a Liberal Bishop, who touched his hat to the leading Dissenters. Harriet Martineau's father was a Dissenter, though not perhaps a leading one. He was descended from a Huguenot surgeon who emigrated from Dieppe to Norwich for the sake of his Calvinistic principles. But before Harriet was born, the grim doctrine of predestination had given place, for the Martineau family, to the simple Bible-worship of a Presbyterianism sufficiently vague and easy-going to merit its qualifying "English." English Presbyterianism was preached every Sunday in the Octagon Chapel, just round the corner from

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the tall flat-fronted house in Magdalen Street where the Thomas Martineaus lived. The family worshipped in company with a host of cousins and connections, headed by John Taylor and his wife, a lady whose lively conversation was so celebrated as to gain her the title of the “Madame Roland of Norwich.”

Whatever the spiritual position of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Martineau may have been, their social rank in the cousinhood left something to be desired. Culture was adored in Norwich, the self-styled “Athens of England,” and culture meant, above all things, knowing French. Thomas Martineau, a meek and honest manufacturer of bombazines, had passed through the fires of education without receiving any very noticeable scars. His wife, the clear-headed, vigorous daughter of a Newcastle wholesale grocer, had a strong natural taste for reading and knew by heart several of the poems of Burns, an admired acquaintance of her brother’s. She was a capable and determined woman, but since she knew no French her place in the social scale of the Norwich coterie was settled. She was invited to the intellectual supper-parties of her husband’s cousins, but ignored when she was there. The superior cousins aired their French at every opportunity, and she had to sit dumb while her neighbours chattered in an unknown tongue to foreign

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visitors who might just as well have talked English. She remained in the circle, but not of it, resentful but not rebellious. When it was her turn to give a supper-party, the cousins showed no reluctance to come and eat up the delicacies supplied by her Northern hospitality as well as to drink some of the excellent contents of her husband's cellar, known to be well stocked with the gifts of his French and Spanish customers.

At intervals, all the members of the Taylor and Martineau families were convoked to a solemn feast enriched by a poem composed by John Taylor for the occasion. Other occasional poems flowed in from further sources. Mrs. Barbauld, the laureate of a wider public, was moved by the death of Thomas Martineau's mother to address "A tribute to my honoured friends of the families of Martineau and Taylor" in the following terms :

"Living you honoured her, you mourn her dead;
Her God you worship and her path you tread;
Your sighs shall aid reflection's serious hour,
And cherished virtues bless the kindly shower;
On the loved theme your lips unblamed shall dwell;
Your lives, more eloquent, her worth shall tell.

For me, as o'er the frequent grave I bend,
And pensive down the vale of tears descend,
Companions, parents, kindred called to mourn,
Dropt from my side or from my bosom torn,
A boding voice, methinks, in fancy's ear
Speaks from the tomb and cries, 'Thy friends are here'!"

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Mrs. Barbauld, as this portentous verse indicates, was of the older generation. Thomas Martineau had been a pupil at her husband's school at Palgrave, and she remembered him so kindly, for his gentleness if not for his brilliance, that she was in the habit of calling at his house whenever she came into Norwich. Her visits were welcomed. There were no insufferable airs of intellectual superiority about the handsome elderly lady, in a black silk cloak and bonnet, who would sit and hold skeins of silk for Mrs. Martineau to wind just as gracefully as if she were not well acquainted with Latin as well as French.

But there were few like Mrs. Barbauld, and Mrs. Thomas Martineau, prevented by her lack of the indispensable element of culture from enjoying much consideration in public, found some private compensation by giving rein to a natural turn for lively and sarcastic comment on her neighbours, and consoled herself for her want of influence abroad by dealing out snubs at home. Her rule was described by her daughter as "the taking-down system." It was applied impartially to servants and children, whose inability to retort except on pain of dismissal or punishment created a position of comfortable superiority in her own household for the quick-witted Northerner. How far Mrs. Martineau was really responsible for her daughter

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Harriet's unhappy childhood is an uncertain matter. The daughter's account of her is very different from the report of James Martineau, who was a child in the same home at the same time, and there can be no doubt that Harriet was what is known as a difficult child to manage. One of the friends of her later life remarked that she could neither endure nor pardon the faintest censure on herself, nor admit for a moment that any human being had the slightest claim to sit in judgment on her. Whatever Mrs. Martineau's failings as a mother may have been, it is unlikely that she neglected the duty of scolding Harriet, who concealed a morbid sensitiveness under a sullen manner. She hated being scolded and she remembered it afterwards. She felt that she was treated unjustly, and she painted her mother's portrait, in her *Autobiography*, to illustrate that conception. The portrait was darkened by her biographer, Mrs. Fenwick Miller, who pasted on to Harriet's garbled memories further descriptions of a repressive parent drawn from one of her tales, *The Crofton Boys*. The assurance that this awe-inspiring mother was a faithful picture of Mrs. Thomas Martineau seems to have been based on Mrs. Miller's intuition, and it called forth a strong protest from James Martineau (see Appendix, p. 218), who declared that although Mrs. Miller might assert that his mother frightened everyone into

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hiding their tears from one who rarely shed them herself, he could vouch for having heard one of his sisters declare that she had never known anyone more prone than her mother to weep at the touch of sympathy or grief. Having thus vindicated Mrs. Martineau's ability to cry without difficulty, her son went on to suggest that if Harriet was not happy it was because she suffered from indigestion and low spirits. Finally, Dr. Martineau brought into play the memories his own children cherished of their grandmother, "overflowing with sympathy, the brightest and most versatile of companions." The observed tendency of severe parents to crumble into indulgent grandparents forbids us to take this account of Mrs. Martineau's old age as positive evidence for her dealings with her daughter. Nor can the fact that Harriet suffered from a weak digestion be held to excuse her mother for disregarding her suffering. Even in the early nineteenth century, mothers of large families gained some useful knowledge of their children's constitutions by experience and exercised some judgment in their treatment. Harriet, her sixth child, forced to swallow daily pints of milk with distressing results, had some reason for thinking that a closer observation on her mother's part might have saved her a world of misery.

She was not saved from indigestion or from fear.

She was afraid of tall trees and of the sky at night. The sound of feather-beds being beaten turned her sick with terror. The annual magic-lantern display at Christmas induced cold perspiration and diarrhœa, from the instant the circle of white light appeared on the wall. Most of all, she feared her mother. Of all her nightmares, the worst was a dream in which her mother lifted her in her arms to give her a piece of sugar. There was no human comforter available. Her elder brothers teased her, her sisters scolded, and her father, though kindly, was so rarely assertive as to be practically negligible. She took refuge in a heaven bright with yellow and blue crocuses, where an omniscient God would mete out the justice denied by her mother. The pale-faced, plain little girl who was taken every Sunday to the Octagon Chapel gazed steadily towards the windows in the roof, looking for angels who would descend with instructions from the Almighty to fly straight to the Martineau pew and carry her up to heaven in the sight of the amazed and admiring congregation of cousins. But the angels tarried an unconscionable time and Harriet began to consider other means of escaping to heaven. The thought of suicide attracted her and she went so far as to look for the carving-knife to cut her throat. She declared that it was only the presence of servants in the kitchen that led her to postpone the plan,

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which was eventually abandoned in favour of a scheme for running away to a farm, where she would be safe from recognition, disguised as a milkmaid, in a woollen petticoat.

Harriet experienced the torture of jealousy early. She was not more than four or five years old when the son of her father's partner, coming one fine autumn morning into the yard where she and her elder sister, Rachel, were playing with their hoops, lifted his little friend Rachel in his arms, picked some grapes off the vine for her, and carried her over the street to his own home to fetch the pretty book he had for her. Harriet was left alone, at the mercy of a fury of murderous hate. If wishing could have killed her sister, Rachel would have died in agony in young Mr. Watson's arms. In the absence of a human victim, Harriet flogged the ground with her hoop. It was lucky for her that the book bound in red and gold which Rachel brought back from Mr. Watson's house was no more distinguished literature than Gay's *Fables*, for she was doomed to detest it for the rest of her life. It was some time before she could bear to look at any book in red covers, an inhibition which must have been an inconvenience to her, for she was a passionate reader, and even at the age of five something of a writer. Moral precepts imbibed from a Methodist nurse were transcribed in a rough,

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home-made note-book when Harriet was only three. "Duty first, pleasure afterwards," "Never cry for trifles," and other practical maxims for good Puritan conduct, printed large and black on her mind as well as in her note-book, were faithfully reflected to the dutiful, serious Martineau household.

But Harriet's first real encounter with literature occurred when she was seven years old, in the drawing-room of her own home, where she was left alone one Sunday afternoon to nurse a mild ailment while the rest of the family went to chapel. After she had watched them start—her father and mother, her three big brothers, her sisters Elizabeth and Rachel, and her little brother James—she began to look about for an occupation suitable to the day. Sewing, which she liked, was forbidden, but reading was considered an appropriate Sunday diversion. She examined the books lying on the table. Somebody had left a volume open, face downward, a volume bound in dingy calf. The cover was not attractive, and Harriet was repelled, on turning it over, to see a page headed by the word "Argument." She was just putting the book down when her eye caught the more alluring word "Satan." Although there might be no devil in the religion preached in the Octagon Chapel, Harriet was well enough instructed in the character of Satan to be stirred to immediate interest. She began to read

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the passage describing the arch-fiend's headlong fall and was forthwith rapt into Chaos. For the next seven years, so she declared, "the universe lived to Milton's music." At night, she lulled herself to sleep by repeating long stretches from *Paradise Lost*; when the curtains were drawn back in the morning her mind was instantly flooded with descriptions of heavenly light. Encouraged by the adventure, she began to read other poets, and in this activity she was indulged by her formidable mother. Even if there were no French works on the Martineau shelves, there were all the standard English authors, and Harriet was allowed to slip away from the dinner-table to gratify her ravenous appetite for Shakespeare or Goldsmith, or even the *Globe* newspaper.

Mrs. Martineau had a proper respect for literature, but it was as a musician that she really expected Harriet to develop. The girl had a genuine gift, but it was a gift that vanished in the presence of an audience. Singing Handel's songs in an empty room, she was rapt into ecstasy, and her mother, secretly listening in the next room, was moved to drop tears over her work. But when the organist from the cathedral came to give her lessons, her fingers stuck together and her voice was weak and husky. The organist was reputed to be extremely irritable, given to rapping the knuckles of

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his pupils. He never rapped Harriet's knuckles, but he assured her that she had no more mind than a music-book, no more feeling than the lid of the piano and no more heart than the chimney-piece. Twice a week the child had to endure the agony of the lessons. But there was a sudden relief. The master, who had grown thinner and crosser, went away for a holiday and died. The news of his death, announced by her father at the dinner-table, filled Harriet with radiant delight, a state of mind of which she was very properly ashamed.

A child who can escape from the gloom of daily discipline into the freedom of music and poetry is never so wholly pitiable as Harriet thought herself. She cried, she said, every day, and although she made a brave resolution to pass at least one entire day without crying, she gave up the attempt in despair, after six years of vain though persevering effort. These tears were shed because she was unappreciated, because, under her mother's rule, there was no chance for any growth of healthy self-respect in Harriet's sensitive nature. She could oppose no effective resistance to the constant suggestion of her inferiority, for her temperament was abnormally susceptible to suggestion of all kinds. This is clear from several of the facts recorded in the *Autobiography*, and in particular those relating to her mesmeric experiences. Equally

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significant in its way is her curious failure, on two given occasions, to perceive sights over-eagerly anticipated. When she was seven, she went with her mother and her sisters and James to stay with her grandfather at Newcastle. Naturally, an expedition to the seaside was planned for the children from inland Norwich. Harriet was in a state of high excitement. She went to Tynemouth with Rachel and James, in charge of an aunt who marched them all to the edge of a low cliff and faced them with the North Sea. Rachel and James broke into immediate exclamation, but Harriet was silent. Questioned by her aunt, the truthful child said quite frankly that she could see no water anywhere before her. Not until she had been helped to scramble down the cliff and led so near the sea that the waves lapped against her toes could she perceive them. Becoming simultaneously conscious of the whole expanse of water, she realised that she had been idiotically blind not to see it sooner. On the second occasion, the appearance of the great comet that blazed in the sky in 1811, she was never able to see what she looked for. It was in vain that she went with the others to the top of her father's warehouse every night to observe it. The exclamations of her family only exasperated Harriet to frenzy. "Look, it's as large as a saucer!" they would say, and Harriet looked obediently along

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the line of a pointing finger to blank vacancy. Her brothers told her she might just as well pretend not to see the moon, but there was no pretence about it. The comet remained invisible, no matter how persistently she strained her remarkably good eyes.

Throughout life she was dependent on those eyes for most of her impressions, for her other senses were inefficient. She could neither smell nor taste, although one sudden revelation of the joy of taste suggests that the disability was purely functional. It happened at luncheon one day, when she was a middle-aged woman. She was feeling rather tired and had a headache, but she was startled into complete forgetfulness of this ailment by the amazing and delicious sensation she experienced on taking a piece of mutton into her mouth. Afraid that she might swoon from delight in the strong but exquisite flavour, she hastily poured water into her glass and drank. She ate the rest of the mutton on her plate with unabated relish, keeping her transports within bounds by swallowing water with each mouthful. As soon as the meal was over, she sniffed at a bottle of eau-de-Cologne to discover whether she could smell as well as taste. She found that she could. She began to wonder with real interest what food there would be at the dinner-party she was to go to in the evening, but the power

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left her before dinner-time and everything on her plate was as dull and tasteless as usual.

In the family circle, Harriet's lack of ability to smell or taste was thought for a long time to be affectation. The same affectionate explanation was advanced to account for her growing difficulty in hearing. She became slightly deaf when she was twelve, and inconveniently so when she was sixteen. When it was acknowledged that she was really unable to hear and not merely tiresomely inattentive, her family scolded her for not asking to have things repeated. But Harriet had been urged by her eldest brother never to make herself as obnoxious as a certain old lady he had watched pestering her neighbour at a dinner-party to tell her what everybody said, and she had taken a vow that she would never ask. She would have liked to refuse to go to parties, where her deafness did nothing to help her natural shyness, but her mother insisted that whether she could hear what was said to her or not she must be sociable. The increasing difficulty of following the chapel services and the music at concerts was a hard trial. After she had lost her appreciation of musical pitch, she found that she could help herself by pressing her shoulder-blades against the wooden rail of her chair, when she heard the pitch a third below its true place in the scale. As her hearing grew worse, bass sounds

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lost their smoothness and came in pulses, beating in the ear and vibrating in the pit of the stomach, while treble sounds were still distinct. Once, long after her deafness was at its worst, she placed a “musical snuff-box” on her head, and forthwith fainted from the shock of hearing music so clearly. As soon as she recovered her senses, she replaced the instrument and heard the piece through to the end. From that day, any musical box within reach of her hand was clapped on to her head.

II

ESSAYS AND ROMANCE

HARRIET MARTINEAU was a remarkably well-educated and accomplished woman. Her digestion for milk may have been weak, but her capacity for assimilating knowledge was strong. Much of her youthful energy was inevitably spent on the fine needlework which was the common occupation of gentlewomen. She could make all her own clothes. She could cover dancing shoes with silk and plait straw bonnets. But Mrs. Martineau held unusual views as to the blessing of education for girls, and she looked about for the means of giving her daughters the advantages she had missed herself. Rachel and Harriet were able to profit by the ruinous conversion of the director of a flourishing boys' school from "orthodox dissent" to Unitarianism. It was a conversion which cost the poor man so many of his pupils that he announced himself ready to fill the gaps in his classes with girls. The two Martineau girls proved to be among the best of his scholars. They learnt Latin to the point of real enjoyment of the authors they read, and survived the test of

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verse-making with credit. In French, that supreme symbol of Norwich culture, they were carefully grounded by a real Frenchwoman. Good though she was at languages, Harriet loved better the practice of English Composition in obedience to a complete set of rules for the arrangement and development of ideas. In this system, the Proposition was followed by the Reason, and the Reason by the Rule. Then came the Example (two Examples, ancient and modern), followed by the Confirmation and the Conclusion. Harriet's love of order was gratified by this neat method of labelling the processes of thought. The artist was already swathing herself in formulas which braced while they stifled. Within those bands her mind was admirably exercised. It did not stop at languages and literature. Attracted by the mystery of numbers, she would pass hours of her play-time working sums on her slate, for the pure pleasure of juggling with figures. She learnt something about the National Debt in a geography book, and made so much of her discovery that her brothers used to set her to explain the operation of the Sinking Fund as a forfeit at a Christmas game. When at last it became clear that the schoolmaster's spiritual gain had involved so great a pecuniary loss that he would be obliged, in spite of his girl pupils, to leave Norwich, Harriet was

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disconsolate. She was deputed to utter the thanks and good wishes of all the pupils when the day came to bid their master farewell, but she was incapable of any eloquence more articulate than sobs.

After the school was closed, masters came to the Martineau house to continue the instruction of Rachel and Harriet in foreign tongues. But it was not long before Mrs. Martineau decided that it would be wise to send Harriet away from home for a time. She was a peculiarly difficult member of the family, clumsy, shy, irritable and deaf. It had become habitual for her brothers and sisters to tease and laugh at her, treatment which she resented furiously. Her jealousy of her sister Rachel had been stirred to vigorous life by a companion who had pointed out the evident partiality of Mrs. Martineau for the elder girl. Goaded by this passion, Harriet dared to accuse her dreaded mother of thinking that "everything that Rachel said and did was right and everything that I said and did was wrong." Mrs. Martineau was horrified by the outburst. She told Harriet to "ask God to forgive you for your conduct to-night; for I don't know that I can." But the obdurate Harriet refused to say any prayers at all that evening. She went down trembling to breakfast next day, but no further allusion was made to the "scene"

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by her mother, who from that time displayed a scrupulous impartiality in her treatment of her two daughters. Nevertheless, she felt that it would be more comfortable for everyone if Harriet went away, and it was arranged that she should go to stay with an aunt who kept a school at Bristol. The plan succeeded excellently. Harriet found in her aunt a being she could love without fear, and in her cousins companions she could admire without envy. She could tell all her troubles to her sympathetic aunt, even the terrible grief she was in about the unsatisfactory state of her hair. Her aunt treated the trouble with serious attention. She arranged for her niece to see a friend of hers who had remarkably beautiful hair, and who offered the simple advice to brush more and comb less.

Harriet was fifteen when she went to Bristol, ripe for adolescent adorations. She fell an easy victim to the spell of Lant Carpenter, the idol of the Bristol Unitarians. The unflattering portrait of this minister given in the *Autobiography*—“superficial in his knowledge, scanty in ability, narrow in his conceptions, and thoroughly priestly in temper”—is to be attributed chiefly to her emphatic repudiation, in later life, of Unitarianism and all its preachers. When she was at Bristol she was, as she admitted, his devout and devoted catechumen. She already held the woolly Unitarian creed with sincere con-

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viction, but Carpenter transformed conviction into fanaticism. When she returned to Norwich, after fifteen months under his influence, her family felt that her religious zeal was altogether too fervent for comfort. They laughed at her, but not without respect, for they were all good Unitarians. Her account of Carpenter and his powers as a teacher induced her father and mother to provide the hundred guineas a year needed to make their son James one of his dozen pupils.

It was perhaps partly his association with Carpenter that led Harriet to enshrine her brother James as the next object of her devotion. But more was required of James in return. He was expected to meet affection with equal affection. He did his best. He was fond of his sister, even if not to the same point of dependence, and they had several tastes in common, including their admiration for Carpenter and their love of Latin. They wrote long letters to each other filled with Unitarian idealism and philosophical speculation. Mrs. Martineau assured James that his letters to his sister were "productive of more pleasure to her than any one circumstance besides." It was unfortunate for Harriet that James fell virtuously in love, when he was no more than seventeen years old, with his future wife. This precocious attachment was perhaps responsible for Harriet's dis-

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illusioned observation that "in the history of human affections, of all natural relations the least satisfactory is the fraternal. Brothers are to sisters what sisters can never be to brothers as objects of engrossing and devoted affection." Even supposing James to have been as devoted and engrossed as she was herself, they could enjoy each other's society only during his vacations, for after a short experience as apprentice in machine-works at Derby, the young man decided that he had more vocation for the ministry than for engineering, and went to be trained at the Unitarian College at York. It was distressing to him to see his sister Harriet reduced to despair by his recurrent leave-takings. He tried to think of consolations for her, and as one of these difficult occasions approached he offered her a little sound fraternal advice. After each heart-breaking farewell, he suggested, she might seek distraction in some new pursuit. For the following term he proposed authorship. Why should not Harriet solace her loneliness by writing an essay for the *Monthly Repository*, the Unitarian magazine read by the family?

Harriet professed herself ready to try the remedy, on condition that James too should write an essay for the same periodical. But he explained that she was asking too much. Authorship was a highly

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commendable exercise for her, but it would hardly do for a man in his position. A serious young student of a Unitarian training college had his status to consider. The serious young student's tutors might be unfavourably impressed if they saw him rushing prematurely into print. But there was no such reason for Harriet to wait. She had no career as a Unitarian minister to consider. She asked what she should write about. James replied that there was that inspiring subject she had discussed with him—female writers on practical Divinity. Why should she not try that? He persuaded her to promise that she would, yes, she really would try. James's wishes were commands for Harriet. She promised and she kept her word punctually. Soon after six o'clock one September morning she was left to her "widowhood." Before seven she was busy on the article.

The practice of translating Tacitus and Petrarch had given her some facility in the art of expressing the thoughts of others in English, and she had always enjoyed Composition. She began. "I do not know," she wrote, "whether it has been remarked by others as well as myself, that some of the most useful works on the subject of practical Divinity are by female authors." Already, in that first sentence, two planks of Harriet's platform are laid in position, for in addition to the assertion

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that women are intellectual beings, she reduces Divinity to utilitarian ethics. Practical Divinity was admirable conduct and the article was concerned with the precepts, not the creeds, of the female authors cited. Its purpose was to demonstrate that women could teach morality better than men. She signed herself "Discipulus," posted the article to the editor of the *Monthly Repository*, and suffered the shock of seeing it in print in the very next number, published in October, 1822. That number was delivered before service-time on a Sunday morning. Harriet kept her secret through the morning, but after chapel in the afternoon, her eldest brother invited her to come back to tea with himself and his bride. He had his own copy of the *Repository*, and began, as a suitable Sunday entertainment for his wife and sister, to read aloud from it. To Harriet's confusion, he selected her article. After a paragraph, he observed that it was the work of a new hand: "They have had nothing as good as this for a long while." Harriet was unusually silent. Repeated openings for admiration were missed by her. At last her brother asked her what was the matter? Why was she so uncommonly grudging in her praise? Was she not listening?

She was driven to confession. Her brother was startled and read on in silence. But when she rose

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to go, he advised her to "leave it to other women to make shirts and darn stockings," while she pursued the path of a female writer.

She took the advice. "Discipulus" continued to send articles to the *Repository*, the next one, on Female Education, urging that although the mental powers of women might be inferior to those of men, they could not fail to be improved by better education, which would not only fit them to perform their feminine duties more intelligently, but also, by elevating their characters, react beneficially on their male companions. The masculine pseudonym was dropped in favour of feminine anonymity for the production of her first published book, *Devotional Exercises: consisting of Reflections and Prayers for the Use of Young Persons. To which is added an Address on the Lord's Supper. By a Lady.* The *Exercises* had quite a success in Unitarian circles and went into a second edition. A second work in the same vein, *Addresses, Prayers and Hymns*, was a source of comfort to her father during his last illness.

Having experimented in authorship, Harriet found it unnecessary to take up a new hobby each time James went away. Her time was sufficiently occupied. Nor was James to continue in undisputed possession of her heart. The history of her relations with her brother's friend, John Hugh

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Worthington, has been as industriously disputed as Mrs. Martineau's maternal disposition, but at least it is clear that Harriet, gazing back from the age of fifty-two years on her past, either believed that she and Worthington had been mutually attracted during a visit he paid to the Martineau house in 1823, or else wrote down a number of plain statements which were entirely without foundation. Her story was that the attentions of the young man, a grave and conscientious student, destined, like James, for the ministry, were observed by her parents, who encouraged her to hope that a romantic dream might end in marriage. This hope, she added, "was destined to be crushed for a time in two hearts by the evil offices of one who has much to answer for in what he did." The *Autobiography* does not mention the interfering villain by name, but Mrs. Miller's *Life of Harriet Martineau* is quite explicit in declaring it to be James himself, who opposed an engagement because he considered his sister and his friend unsuited to each other. The appearance of this *Life*, in 1884, drew an emphatic denial of Mrs. Miller's statement from James Martineau (see p. 225). There was, he declared, no indication whatever of any tender feeling for his sister Harriet displayed by his friend Worthington on the occasion of that visit, or, indeed, for a long time afterwards. Letters written

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to him by both parties during the three subsequent years contained no greater sign of intimacy than messages of "kind remembrance" for each other. And Worthington, in the course of an idle speculation on the possibility of marriage, had described in some detail the qualities he should wish his wife to possess. "The ideal," commented Dr. Martineau, "is plainly not drawn from my sister's characteristics."

It is open to all who believe Harriet Martineau to have stated what she thought to be the truth, to consider that a lover's imagination and a brother's experience may paint very different portraits of the same model, and there is no need to discredit the tale of a mutual attraction because Worthington did not confide in his friend. He was clearly not the kind of young man to bubble over into confidence if the audience were not sympathetic, and James may well have conveyed an impression that he would be surprised rather than pleased to hear of a romantic attachment between his friend and his poor afflicted sister. Accustomed as he must have been to regard Harriet's affection as his own rather embarrassing property, he would be unlikely to suspect a sentimental transference without the clearest evidence. We are free to believe in the attachment and to believe that James knew nothing about it. We can suppose that Worthington, a

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most scrupulous young man, hesitated to propose to the daughter of a prosperous manufacturer, when his own prospects were far from settled. It is at any rate certain that three years later, when the Martineau money had melted away, he did propose, and that he wrote to announce the engagement to James in terms "which distinctly prove that he did not expect me to be prepared for it."

Whether Harriet was suffering, during those three years, from a thwarted passion or not, she had enough other troubles to occupy her mind. Her eldest brother died of consumption. Her father's business deteriorated to such an extent that when he too died, in 1826, his widow and daughters were left with what could barely be called an independence. It was indeed fortunate for the family that Harriet had inspired so excellent and conscientious a young man as Worthington with the desire to take her off their hands. But poor Worthington did not live to carry out his intention. After a few months of an engagement which caused Harriet to doubt her fitness for the responsibility of being his wife, he lost his health and his reason. His physician and his mother wrote to urge Harriet to go to see him, and the fact that she refused is, like the other circumstances of the engagement, variously accounted for. Her biographer, Mrs. Miller, declared that "Harriet eagerly sought per-

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mission to hasten to his side " from Mrs. Martineau, who forbade her to go. " The old habit of obedience to her mother, and the early implanted ideas of filial duty, were too strong for Harriet at once to break through them; she did not defy her mother and go; and in a few more weeks . . . Worthington died, and left her to her life of heart widowhood, darkened by this shadow of arbitrary separation to the last." But James Martineau's memory, supported by contemporary correspondence, placed the values very differently, throwing the entire responsibility for the decision not to see Worthington on Harriet herself, who, by this account, asked her mother to write for her to explain that she did not feel able to go to Leicester, where her lover was being nursed in his own home, and at the same time to break off the engagement. The probability is that Harriet, distracted by anxiety, consulted her mother and may have taken her advice. She must have supposed that Worthington was going to recover, and wished to make it clear that she could not undertake to marry a man whose mind had once given way. To have gone to see him would have placed her in a false position. But to write a letter to that effect to the young man's mother would have been so unpleasant a task that it is hardly surprising that Harriet was glad to let her mother perform it for her. The

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Autobiography is very silent about this last phase of the engagement, although there is a complaint that "the calamity was aggravated to me by the unaccountable insults I received from his family, whom I had never seen." James Martineau's account of the situation supplies plenty of cause for the resentment felt by the Worthington family. If the young man had lived, they might have allowed that her decision was not unreasonable, but since he died it was excusably felt as heartless and unnecessary.

Attempts which have been made to paint Harriet Martineau as a permanent "heart widow" are scarcely justified by the subsequent course of her life and affections. But she certainly passed through a painful period of mourning, all the more poignant for being darkened by remorse. When Worthington was dead, she was sorry she had refused to see him. There is no ground for supposing that she was not fond of him and pleased to be the object of his love. But twenty years later she assured her friend, Anna Jameson, that she had never been in love herself and had no conception of the state, "except through imagination and sympathy," a statement sufficiently borne out by the ignorance of any profound or moving passion displayed in her novel, *Deerbrook*. Her enthusiastic, idealising adorations of the friends of her later

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life suggest, indeed, the experiences of a perpetual emotional adolescence.

She turned naturally, after Worthington's death, to the occupation that had served her so well as a consolation for James's departures. She wrote. Inevitably she wrote verse, melancholy but moral. A few tales, suitable for Sunday-school scholars, were bought by a Calvinistic publisher, who afterwards employed her to turn out tracts. But she soon gave up tract-making for better work. The *Monthly Repository* was transforming itself from a Unitarian organ to a literary magazine of serious criticism, under the able editorship of the eloquent preacher, William J. Fox. Fox had appealed for assistance in raising the level of the magazine and Harriet promptly responded. She became a regular and extensive contributor. Fox was not in a position to offer her any remuneration at all for her articles. All he could hold out was a promise of full and careful criticism. He kept this promise and his contributor accepted his critical admonitions with gratitude. She poured out work for the *Repository*—essays, poems and reviews—but the stream flowed under difficult conditions, for no true gentlewoman could afford to be seen labouring with a pen, and Mrs. Martineau and her daughters were living in strict gentility on their straitened means. Harriet was under the obligation to con-

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ceal her literary habits from the neighbours as assiduously as Fox concealed her sex from his readers. This discomfort was, however, eased by the complete cessation of any return of income from the old factory, a disaster which relieved the Martineaus from the necessity for keeping up appearances at the same time that it forced them to abandon working without wages. Harriet, dropped out of Norwich "society," might write as much and as openly as she liked, but it was important for the family purse that her work should bring in something more than thanks and criticism. Her deafness prevented her from seeking a situation as a governess, the only respectable position open to young ladies so unfortunate as to lose their money through the mismanagement of their male relatives. The clever and competent Rachel went away to teach, but Harriet stayed at home to do fancy-work by daylight and to write by night. It had to be admitted that writing was not a paying occupation. Her manuscripts were returned by every periodical except the impecunious *Repository*, which eventually offered her the sum of fifteen pounds a year for as many contributions as she "thought proper." Under this contract the magazine was generously fed for the following two years. Fox was an encouraging critic, and on his advice, Harriet sent in some tales, describing,

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“with all possible fidelity, the aspect and life of the land of the Hebrews, at the critical period of the expectation of the Messiah.” It was nothing to her that she had no first-hand acquaintance with Palestine. She preferred to work without it, feeling perhaps, like James Mill when he wrote his *History of India*, that the less one knew of a place from personal experience, the better the chance of maintaining an objective attitude. Mill’s reward was his post in the India House, Harriet’s was the satisfaction of gaining a little recognition and a little money by the publication of *Traditions of Palestine*. This was real encouragement for a literary career.

III

MISSIONS TO CATHOLICS, JEWS, MOHAMMEDANS AND THE ENGLISH PEOPLE

HAVING attained the ripe age of twenty-seven, Harriet set down in her memorandum book a series of good and solemn resolutions for the conduct of her life. "After long and mature deliberation," she wrote, "I have determined that my chief subordinate object in life shall henceforth be the cultivation of my intellectual powers, with a view to the instruction of others by my writings." As the chosen means to attain her aim of becoming "a forcible and elegant writer on religious and moral subjects, so as to be useful to refined as well as unenlightened minds," she laid down ten rules for her own discipline. The first provided for the constant subordination of intellectual to moral interests, the second reminded her to seek the assistance of God in her exertions, the third was an injunction to "impart full confidence to my family respecting my pursuits, but to be careful not to weary them with too frequent a reference to myself; and to be as nearly as possible silent

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on the subject to all the world besides." A comprehensive resolution to study diligently almost every branch of knowledge was followed by the practical admonition to dismiss from her thoughts the subject of her morning composition for the rest of the day. Another rule provided for early rising and general economy of time, especially by a careful government of wandering thoughts, while the seventh took into account all the departments of enlightenment not already cared for under other heads, including "social intercourse, observation of external nature, of the fine arts and of the varieties of human life." Further resolutions embraced the virtues of patience, perseverance and humility, and in the tenth she besought herself to remember "that I have no right to expect the privilege of eminent usefulness, though permitted to seek it."

Her determination to enter the ranks of female writers on practical Divinity being thus formally placed on record, Harriet began to look about in earnest for more literary work. She naturally appealed to her constant adviser, Fox. Should she write a novel about an election? Fox was not encouraging about a novel. Could he find a publisher for some little tales on political economy? In January she went up to London to stay with an uncle and aunt chiefly in order to talk over her prospects and her ambitions with Fox, who was

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very sympathetic. He thought he could find her enough proof-reading and other literary devilling to maintain her, but only on condition that she lived in London. He wrote to her mother about this plan, and Harriet wrote too, but the answer she received, although its tenor has been variously described, had the effect of making her give up the project. According to Harriet and her biographer, Mrs. Miller, her mother sent her peremptory orders to come home. According to James Martineau's memories and documents, Mrs. Martineau urged Harriet to stay in London for some months longer and then to divide her time between London and Norwich until the whole family could move to the metropolis. Possibly neither account is wholly accurate, but the reply which Harriet wrote to her mother (published in Mrs. Chapman's *Memorials*) makes it impossible to doubt that Mrs. Martineau had been vexed by the proposal and that Harriet was sacrificing her inclinations to her filial duty in renouncing it. Mrs. Martineau had not only been grieved to think that Harriet could contemplate leaving her home, but shocked to hear that she could even consider unchaperoned residence in London lodgings. Harriet's letter, obediently announcing her intention to return home, explicitly denies the scandalous intention of independent life in lodgings. "I never entertained

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so preposterous an idea for a moment as that of going alone into lodgings, and must have expressed myself very ill if I led you to think so. It would be positively disreputable. I thought of boarding in a family." And she adds, poor Harriet, that "my aunt is so pleased with the basket-making that she has given me two dozen pieces of braid and cord, satin—lilac, blue and pink—paper, etc. How very kind! I have seen a most beautiful new sort of bag which I find I can imitate, and I have several orders already in this family and shall probably make two or three guineas by them." Before writing this dutiful letter, Harriet had read her mother's letter to her aunt, "who has been my confidante in this business, and we agree in seeing that there is not a shadow of doubt as to what I am to do." The positive tone of the confidante's advice may be imagined, for she had no sort of sympathy for Harriet's plan nor confidence in her ability. When she heard that Fox had written to Mrs. Martineau she wrote to Norwich herself, without her niece's knowledge, to urge that Harriet should be recalled home, where she could use her needle to supplement the family income, rather than encouraged to continue a wild-goose chase with a quill.

But Mrs. Martineau, though she shared the common prejudice of her time against the emancipation of daughters from the home, had too much

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respect for brains and education to wish to deprive Harriet of an intellectual occupation. And Harriet, on her side, had no intention of leading a life of unmitigated bag-making. When she did go home, after six months' absence, she was full of a new scheme for establishing her reputation as a forcible and elegant writer, and the fact that she lost no time in telling her mother about it is proof enough that she was in the habit of relying on maternal sympathy for her literary designs. She had seen that the British and Foreign Unitarian Association announced a prize essay-writing competition. Three prizes were offered for essays designed to convert Catholics, Jews and Mohammedans respectively to the Unitarian faith. The essays were to be sent in anonymously, each superscribed with a motto which was to be repeated on a sealed envelope containing the writer's name, and no envelopes but those of the successful candidates were to be opened. The prizes offered were of amounts perhaps proportioned to the estimated difficulty of conversion—ten guineas for the Catholics, fifteen for the Jews and twenty for the Mohammedans. Disregarding her mother's cautious advice to concentrate her mind on one essay, Harriet undertook all three. She began with "The Essential Faith of the Universal Church," the appeal to Roman Catholics, which was to be sent in six months

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before the others. It was written quickly and copied for a sovereign by a schoolboy, to obviate the risk of any member of the committee recognising her handwriting. The news that she had won the prize, which came to her in a few weeks, braced her to read the Koran and to inquire into the worship of the synagogues. When the essays addressed to the followers of Moses and Mohammed were finished she paid an usher, "who was not only idle but saucy," to copy one and "a poor woman who wrote a clerk-like hand" to copy the other. Folded into different shapes, wrapped in different-coloured paper, sealed with different wax and stamped with different seals, "The Faith as Unfolded by Many Prophets" and "The Faith as Manifested through Israel" were deposited at the office by different messengers on the day the competition closed. The announcement that Miss Harriet Martineau of Norwich had been awarded all three prizes was made at the Unitarian May Meeting of 1831. "We shall not now stop to inquire," said the *Monthly Repository*, "how it happened that our ministers would not or could not prevent the honour of championing the cause of pure Christianity against the whole theological world from devolving upon a young lady. However that may be, she has won the honour and well deserves to wear it."

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Looking back on this triumph from her later agnostic standpoint, Harriet could naturally find nothing to say in favour of her essays. Those designed to convert Jews and Mohammedans she described as "fancy pieces," adding that if any Jews or Mohammedans had, in fact, been allured by them into the Unitarian fold, such converts could hardly be worth having. Of the effect of the "ignorant and metaphysical" call to Catholics she had so remarkable a proof that, however sincerely she might blush in later life for its success, she could scarcely have denied it. "Oh, my mother," she wrote in August, 1831, "I have something to tell you which far exceeds all that I have had to relate. A Catholic priest, a young, talented, educated man, has been converted by my tract, and has nobly renounced his office and all his expectations, and avowed himself a Unitarian. He has now but £5 in the world, and *no* prospect."

God had indeed given to the Unitarians a prophet in their own speech.

From the conversion of Catholic priests to be a charge upon Unitarian funds, Harriet turned to a wider and even more absorbing mission. She felt herself to be called to explain and justify to the entire reading population of the country the divine dispensation of political economy. The doctrine of the new science had not been formulated

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long. It was little known among the working classes, but it occupied in the minds of educated Liberals much the same consecrated place as was held a generation later by the hypotheses of Natural Selection and the Survival of the Fittest. Harriet, in common with other serious and high-minded persons, had been distressed to observe that a relatively large proportion of the population of Great Britain existed in a state of deplorable discomfort. She had been pained by the tendency of these not unnaturally discontented masses to protest against their hard lot in ways which proved them ignorant of the true cause of their misery. Labourers, for instance, carried a perverse grudge against those beneficent machines, which were so efficiently replacing human hands, to the extreme length of breaking them in pieces. The families of the poor increased at a rate altogether disproportionate to their means of subsistence. The beautiful, immutable "laws" of political economy were but too evidently ignored by these poor people, who vainly imagined that they could relieve their situation by combining together against their employers, instead of being resigned to the necessary operation of the chain of causes and effects discovered and expounded by Adam Smith, by Mr. Malthus, and, above all, by David Ricardo.

Ricardo, an amiable Jew possessed of a genius

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for constructing towering systems of flawless deductions based on insecure premises, had turned the speculative ability of his race to such good account on the Stock Exchange that he was able to retire, affluent and admired, when he was about forty years old. When he entered Parliament, by the simple process of buying a seat, in 1819, two years after the publication of his *Principles of Political Economy*, he was received with the respect due to his financial position as well as to his ability to discourse with crystalline lucidity upon subjects presenting themselves to the ordinary intelligence as labyrinths leading circuitously but surely to perdition. Having proved, by his personal success in acquiring wealth, the validity of his economic doctrine, Ricardo had much more immediate influence than his predecessor, Adam Smith, a university professor, or his contemporary Malthus, a teacher and a clergyman. When Ricardo led the way through the tangle of rent, profit, price and wages, members of Parliament fell in behind him with immense relief. After his early death, in 1823, they cherished his memory and enshrined his principles. Malthus's protest against "the general adoption of the new theories of my excellent friend, Mr. Ricardo," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of 1821, was ineffective, but he held to his view. The more he considered the subject, the more con-

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vinced he felt that the main part of Ricardo's structure would not stand; "after having drawn into its vortex a great number of very clever men, it will be unable to support itself against the testimony of obvious facts, and the weight of those theories which, though less simple and captivating, are more just, on account of their embracing more of the causes which are in actual operation in all economical results."

But Malthus was in a hopeless minority. Clever men were plunging gratefully into the vortex, accompanied by at least one clever woman. Harriet Martineau was first interested in the new theories by Mrs. Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy*. Mrs. Marcet was the restless, elderly wife of a doctor who had advised her to take to writing as an outlet for her superfluous energy. The prescription had worked well. She had packed chemistry, natural philosophy and several other branches of knowledge into *Conversations* before she took over political economy. With practised ease, she presented an omniscient "Mrs. B." leading her pupil, "Caroline," along the economic track. Caroline was displayed as "an intelligent young person, fluctuating between the impulse of her heart and the progress of her reason, and naturally imbued with all the prejudice and popular feelings of uninformed benevolence." In the eyes

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of the political economists the impulse of the heart could never beat an harmonious accompaniment to the progress of reason, and uninformed benevolence was the sin against the Holy Ghost. It was one of the cardinal conceptions of Adam Smith and Malthus that undiluted self-interest is a necessary condition of the common welfare of mankind and the surest evidence of the wisdom of the Creator. "By this wise provision," taught Malthus, "i.e. by making the passion of self-love beyond comparison stronger than the passion of benevolence, the more ignorant are led to pursue the general happiness, an end which they would have totally failed to attain if the moving principle of their conduct had been benevolence. Benevolence, indeed, as the great and constant source of action, would require the most perfect knowledge of causes and effects, and can therefore only be an attribute of the Deity. In a being so short-sighted as man it would lead to the grossest errors, and soon transform the fair and cultivated soil of human society into a dreary scene of want and confusion."

Harriet, after accompanying Mrs. B. and Caroline to the end of their *Conversations*, went further and read more. The principles of Ricardo were a revelation to her. She, who had looked at the misery of her country with eyes dimmed by the

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moisture of uninformed benevolence, now saw it clearly through the powerful lens of the famous economist. The entire world, she perceived, was populated by beings divinely inspired to seek their common economic good. All that was needed to enable this lovely impulse to flourish was complete freedom from restriction. Free competition, free exchange of labour, free foreign trade, individual liberty for everyone—these were the simple formulæ for the millennium, coupled, it was understood, with that necessary restraint on the growth of the population urged by Mr. Malthus. No sooner had she perceived this economic paradise, than Harriet was possessed by the desire to share her vision with her suffering compatriots, that they too might be saved. Demands for higher wages would surely cease once it was explained to the workers that their wages depended, not on factors within human control, but on great natural laws as predictable and immutable as the law of gravity. Combinations of labourers would fall peacefully asunder as soon as the eternal uselessness of such associations had been logically demonstrated. Had not Mr. James Mill shown that all men must be guided by their innate reasonableness to the perception of truth and the rejection of error, once the issues were put before them in black print on white paper ?

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In the course of their *Conversations* Mrs. B. had suggested to the listening Caroline that mothers might do worse than instruct their children in political economy by means of such tales as Miss Edgeworth's *Cherry Orchard*. It can hardly be doubted that in this counsel Harriet saw her opportunity. Her subsequent astonishing claim to be the first to conceive the idea of using fiction as a vehicle for instruction and her invariably acid disparagement of Miss Edgeworth's work can only be due to a deep and obstinate determination to refuse to acknowledge the source of her inspiration. Nothing less than the word of the Almighty spoken in the ear of his prophet, Harriet, was to be held accountable for her decision to place her talent as a romancer at the service of the theory of rent and the principle of *laissez-faire* in a number of stories which should combine human interest and economic doctrine so cunningly that no reader could fail to absorb the true faith from every page. She had spoken of her plan to Fox. Later, when her prize-winnings enabled her to go to visit James at Dublin, she spoke of it again. "The people," she said, "want this work and they shall have it." James nodded his approval and Harriet began to write her tales.

But she was careful not to write many tales before she was sure of a publisher to issue them

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in monthly numbers, and at first it seemed impossible to obtain that security. A knowledge of the working of the wages fund might be necessary to the salvation of England, but it was of less immediate interest than the progress of the cholera invasion or the rejection of the Reform Bill by the bishops. Harriet's offers to publishers brought her nothing but refusals.

What was to be the next move?

"You know," she said one afternoon to her mother, "a man of business would go up to town by the next mail and see what is to be done."

Mrs. Martineau protested. Harriet could not think of doing such a thing alone, and in wintry weather!

Harriet persisted, and at last her mother agreed that the question should be referred to the male member of the family, her son Henry. He listened to Harriet's tale, read her letters from publishers, meditated in silence for a minute, and then turned to his sister with the single word "Go." Mrs. Martineau accepted the decision. She had a fire lighted in Harriet's room and ordered that her trunk should be placed in front, to air. Early next day—a dreary December morning—Harriet went up to London, relying on the constant hospitality of a cousin for her lodging.

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Her determination to act like a man of business hardly justified itself in her dealings with the publishers she called to see. Since she had no gift for charming men into indulgence, her sex was nothing but a hindrance, inspiring real men of business with an instinctive distrust of the plans of the thin, pale, deaf young woman who wanted them to publish her stories for her. The one man who believed in her ability, Fox, did all he could to arouse interest in Harriet and her tales, but the only publisher he could usefully influence was his brother Charles, who had just set up in business as a bookseller. Charles was persuaded to make an offer. He would publish the tales, provided five hundred copies were privately subscribed and all profits shared between publisher and author. The proposal was not unreasonable, for Charles Fox was taking risks with a writer of no public reputation, but Harriet found it odious. She detested the necessity for appealing in advance to friends and relatives unlikely to be interested in her scheme or to believe in her capacity. If her tales—those salutary lessons which were to make the labouring classes patient and capitalists secure—were to be subscribed in advance at all, they should be subscribed by members of Parliament as matters of public importance. There was, however, no obvious way of arranging this. Members

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of Parliament showed no more disposition to rescue her from her embarrassment than the angels had shown to carry her to heaven from the Octagon Chapel. Their wives, when approached, talked unpleasantly about the folly of buying pigs in pokes. There appeared to be no way of delivering the message without the unenthusiastic co-operation of Charles Fox, and Harriet found herself constrained to agree to his terms. She set about drawing up a prospectus as a bait for subscribers, but no sooner was it finished than she had to face discouragement in a new and very unexpected quarter. When she took the draft to Dalston, to show it to her faithful friend and supporter, W. J. Fox, she was dismayed to discover that all his confidence in the scheme had evaporated. It soon came out that James Mill had been talking to him. Mill, gifted with a Socratic aptitude for withering the illogical beliefs of his interlocutors by a succession of destructive interrogations, had brought Fox to see for himself that the form proposed by Miss Martineau for propagating the principles of political economy was absurd. Let her abandon the pretence of fiction and stick to honest exposition. Fox undertook to explain the difficulty to his young friend and to press her to follow this excellent advice. He pressed hard but in vain. His obstinate young friend refused to change her plan. She was ener-

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getically in favour of propaganda by fiction. She knew herself to have a mission. “The people want this work and they *shall* have it!”

Inflexible purpose shone in her grey eyes and stiffened her protruding under-lip as she looked at Fox, a short, thickset man with a dark intelligent face. He was the friend who had helped her more than anyone else in the world. He had a real respect for her powers and perhaps for her judgment, but he had to consider his duty to his brother. If Mill were right—and how could Mill be wrong? —he would be very much to blame for advising his inexperienced brother to embark on a doomed adventure. Since, however, he saw that Harriet was bent on writing her futile stories, he could do nothing beyond trying to improve on the contract. He stipulated that Charles must be set free from his bargain after the issue of two monthly numbers unless success were assured within the first fortnight.

What did he mean by “assured”? she asked.

He meant that at least a thousand copies must be sold within the first fortnight.

Harriet replied that although she knew well enough that there was no chance of a sale on such a scale as that, at least five tales must be published.

Fox replied, in effect, that he heard what Miss Martineau said, but that unless success were assured



W. J. Fox

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in the manner indicated, Charles would certainly give up after two numbers.

On this discordant note they parted. Harriet, miserable and weary, dragged herself back four and a half miles to her cousin's house. She sat up writing the Preface to the series of tales until two in the morning, cried until six, and began to send out preliminary circulars at half-past eight. A few days later she went back to Norwich, "thin, yellow and coughing."

A succession of gloomy letters about their joint prospects from Charles Fox did nothing to lighten her spirits. The only encouragement she received was a message from the banking firm of Gurneys, who shared her view of the importance of teaching the discontented masses to acquiesce in economic necessity. After cautiously sounding Henry Martineau as to his sister's mental ability, the firm desired him to tell her that if she found herself in pecuniary difficulties she was to apply to their bank before giving up. She anticipated speedy need of their assistance during the ten days following the publication of the first number. The post brought no letter at all from Charles Fox and she assumed that the issue had fallen flat and dead. Mrs. Martineau tried to cheer her by a bright counter-suggestion that, on the contrary, the issue was doing so well that Fox was too cross over the

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non-fulfilment of his prophecies to write about it. She was quite right about the success of the issue. At the end of the ten days Fox wrote. His letter was to tell Miss Martineau that he proposed to print a second edition of two thousand copies at once. A postscript raised the number to three thousand, another postscript to four and another to five thousand. Harriet ran out into the garden, where she paced up and down the lawn, assuring herself that it was all true and that her anxieties were over for ever.

The Tales were, indeed, extremely successful. They appealed not only to the ignorant public, but to other readers with principles and theories of their own which only needed to be cast in popular form to refashion the world. In their eyes Miss Martineau was divinely created for grinding appetising nourishment out of indigestible axioms. They pelted her with so many blue-books and heavy envelopes weighted with their hobbies that the Norwich postmaster sent word one day that Miss Martineau must please arrange for the collection of her own mail, since it could not be conveyed to her without a special barrow. It became clearer than ever to Harriet that she ought to be living in London, and this time her mother agreed that she should be within easier range than Norwich of those members of Parlia-

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ment who were so much interested in her work and so ready to advise her about how to proceed. But it was some months before she was able to obey the call. Her mother made it a strict condition that Harriet was not to go into lodgings unless she herself knew and approved the landlady, and Harriet, busy manufacturing her Tales, had little time to spare to go hunting for London land-ladies known to Mrs. Martineau. Eventually, however, the condition was fulfilled. A respectable young woman from Norwich had married a London tailor, and Miss Martineau would be welcome in their house in Conduit Street. Nearly a year after her discouraging assault on the publishers of London she returned in the confident assurance of success. She did not presume on that success. On the foggy November day when she arrived, she climbed modestly up two flights of stairs to a sitting-room and little back bedroom on the second floor. It was not until the spring that she allowed herself the luxury of the first floor, and in the summer Mrs. Martineau migrated with her gentle and accommodating sister-in-law to provide Harriet with a proper home, complete with relatives, in Fludyer Street, Westminster.

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HARRIET was no sooner lodged in London than the reformers set about following up their postal attentions by personal appeals. One of the first to wait on her was the Lord Chancellor, Brougham, who arranged to be invited to meet Miss Martineau at dinner. Brougham was annoyed that his fledgeling Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge had been so ill-advised as to reject the chance of publishing the Tales, and he determined to have a compensating set on the abuses of the Poor Law, intended to popularise the projected reforms. Brougham arrived clothed, as usual, entirely in black, from the ridge of his stock to the toes of his polished shoes, and bent, as usual, on conquest. He was put off his stroke by discovering that conversation with Miss Martineau was to be conducted through a long rubber tube, but he soon gave up the trumpet and took to shouting at her instead. In the *Autobiography* she declared that she never liked Brougham, but her letters to Fox, written during this first part of her life in London, suggest that she was sufficiently

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under the spell of the fascinating Lord Chancellor to make her Radical friends uneasy. She undertook to write the Poor Law tales at £100 a tale, of which three-quarters was to be paid by the Diffusion Society and the remainder by Brougham. In the event, the Diffusion Society kept its bargain, but the money due from Brougham was never forthcoming, a fact which, together with Brougham's unpardonable behaviour to Durham, Harriet's chief political hero, was enough to account for her later and blacker view. But even in 1832 she was careful to assure Fox that she was not being led astray. "It is one thing to enjoy the conversation of the most intellectual man in the world and another to approve his measures or have confidence in his principles." By the time she wrote the *Autobiography* she had forgotten that she ever enjoyed Brougham's conversation and declared that she had always preferred to watch him from a distance, "conversing with gentlemen." She condemned his manner to pretty women, although she took care to add that she blamed him less than the "vain women who discarded their ladyhood for his sake."

Coquetry, of however mild a degree, was insufferable to Harriet, who was particularly outraged by any display of feminine charm by other women writers. She found it excessively tiresome

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that on the afternoon when Mrs. Marcet brought Lord Jeffrey to call, Mrs. John Austin, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Taylor of Norwich, should burst in on the sensible conversation which had just begun. Sarah Austin was, in Harriet's opinion, a silly, vain and vastly over-rated literary woman. It was infuriating to watch her engaging Lord Jeffrey's attention and making it clear that she would stay as long as he did. Harriet felt sure that Jeffrey had not come for nonsensical chatter but for serious conversation, probably on political economy, and here was Sarah Austin behaving just like her mother in the old Norwich days, treating the Martineaus as poor and insignificant relations. Jeffrey went off with Mrs. Austin, promising to come back another time. "I am convinced," wrote Harriet, "that he discovered in that short interview what my mother and I felt about the ways of literary people like Mrs. A." But Jeffrey was not, it is to be feared, one of the three men of whom, at the end of her life, Harriet was ready to testify that they talked to women "in a perfectly natural manner, that is, precisely as they talked to men." On the contrary, "to aggravate the follies and take advantage of the weakness of vain women was Jeffrey's most conspicuous and very worst fault." Was he, perhaps, not sorry to leave the improving company of Miss Martineau and her

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mother with the beautiful and sparkling Mrs. Austin? Did his companion take the opportunity to complicate Jeffrey's impression of the earnest missionary by her tales of Harriet's dismal childhood and her mother's lack of culture? However that may be, there was little love lost in the succeeding years between Harriet and Sarah Austin. "Miss Martineau," wrote Mrs. Austin on one occasion to Dilke, "is the last person with whom I wish to enter these or any lists. She is my relation, and I have a vast respect for her on a great many points. But her views on many subjects, especially regarding women, are diametrically opposed to mine, and the kind of notoriety she courts would make me wish myself three feet underground."

Did Coleridge talk to Harriet as she wished men to talk? When she went to visit him at Highgate, he told her that he watched "anxiously" for the monthly numbers of the Tales. "Can it be," she wrote next morning to her mother, "that I am paying him in any measure for what he has done for me?" She thought it not impossible. There were no ascertainable limits to the prophet's faith in the supreme importance of her mission. Still—Coleridge! "Such a picture of an old poet! He is most neatly dressed in black; has perfectly white hair; the under-lip quivering with the touching expression of weakness which is sometimes seen

in old age; the face neither pale nor thin; and the eyes—I never saw such!—glittering and shining so that one can scarcely meet them. He read me (most exquisitely) some scraps of antique English; and, talking about metres, quoted some poetry so as to make my eyes water. He talked some of his transcendentalism, which I wanted to hear. He talks on and on, with his eyes fixed full on you and distinctly as possible. He told me wherein he differed and wherein he agreed with me. . . . He begged me to see him again. I must go.” But the visit was never repeated, and in memory Harriet regretted that she had even once “enacted the hypocrisy of going to see him in the mode practised by his worshippers.” Whatever other modes of seeing him were possible, her own letter, published in Mrs. Chapman’s *Memorials*, makes it clear that there was no hypocrisy about the way she chose. In 1832 she was a faithful worshipper, though she preferred to forget that when she declared, twenty years later, that if Coleridge were remembered at all it would be neither as a poet nor as a philosopher, but as a warning. He had deceived her with his shining eyes. Their glitter had been due to opium rather than to inspiration. And that transcendental conversation, what nonsense it had been! Almost as silly as the poor old man’s criticism of her conception of the social behaviour of human

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beings. “ You appear to consider,” he had said to her, “ that society is an aggregate of individuals.” Of course Harriet considered that society was an aggregate of individuals. There was no other view for a sane economist to hold. But Coleridge had suggested that organised human society was in some absurd way different from the mere sum of its parts, that it was subject to natural laws “ in virtue of its aggregate character and organisation,” that, in fact, the behaviour of a crowd might be different from the behaviour of the individuals composing it. What could be more childish? Looking back on this interview, Harriet declared herself convinced that Coleridge’s philosophical utterances were produced by the same kind of action as Babbage’s calculating machine, the chief difference being that “ the latter issues from sound premises, while few will venture to say that the other has any reliable basis at all.”

Babbage and his machine impressed Miss Martineau favourably. It was regrettable that Babbage, too, was spotted by that vanity which she noticed in so many of her London acquaintances, but he was full of domestic affection and beautifully patient in explaining his machine to the guests at his evening parties. Harriet, who had played for hours on end with sums, for the sheer joy of adding figures together, had nothing but contempt for a

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hopeful lady who was heard to say, after examining the machine, "Now, Mr. Babbage, there is just one thing more I want to know. If you put the question in wrong, will the answer come out right?" Harriet was not amused. "All time and attention devoted to lady examiners of his machine, from that time forward, I regarded as sacrifices of genuine good-nature."

She enjoyed her rapid social success in London as much as she had detested the duty of attending parties in Norwich, where her deafness and lack of small-talk combined to make her a self-conscious failure. Her confidence in herself as a passable dancer had been broken by her sister's lively description of the amusing antics of a young clergyman who had mimicked her awkward motions behind her back at a ball. It was no great wonder that she was glad to be released by poverty from playing the part of a young lady. In London she was on a different basis from the first, yet it was a basis which she would not entirely accept. By the exercise of her own undisputed talent she had attained economic independence and a certain renown. A number of really eminent persons were ready to receive the little Unitarian from the provinces with all possible courteous consideration. The amount of consideration demanded was, however, almost excessive, especially since it was

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demanded as a birthright rather than as personal recognition. People who wished to know Harriet Martineau were obliged to go more than half-way to meet her. She made it plain that they were not to expect a busy authoress to pay morning calls, but she would not permit the other party to the acquaintance to waive formality. She related, with complacency, how Lord and Lady Lansdowne, introduced to her at their own request, invited her in vain to "a concert, a State dinner, a friendly dinner-party, a small evening party and a ball." Certainly not, they had not called upon Miss Martineau and her mother. Her friend Hallam, shocked by this bourgeois obstinacy, told her frankly that it was out of the question for them to call, since Lady Lansdowne was one of the Queen's Ladies-in-Waiting and Lord Lansdowne a Cabinet Minister. Harriet was unmoved by his representations, and when Lansdowne appeared at one of her soirées, brought by a friend, she declared that she considered his presence an impertinence rather than an honour.

It was quite true that she was too busy to pay many calls. From seven to two every day she was at work on her monthly numbers. Each Tale was manufactured with conscientious care. The beneficent science was divided and subdivided into parts, and as each part came up for treatment,

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Harriet took down the sacred books of the economists, read up their expositions of the subject under consideration, and made notes. This took a single morning. An evening sufficed for a summary of the principles to be illustrated, and when it was done she selected the characters and scenes most appropriate to her purpose. An hour or two was given to plotting the outline of the story, and if the theory of rent or the problem of foreign exchange could be best exposed in scenes not known to the writer by experience, she threw in a few hours for extracting local colour from whatever topographical books the library could supply. The third day's work reduced the material to chapters, for which copious tables of contents were written out, containing not only the incidents to be described but all the chunks of political economy that had to be worked in either by example or didactic dialogue. The rest of the work was as easy as knocking down ninepins. Harriet paged her paper, took her pen in her hand and wrote quickly, never pausing, never revising. She entertained a profound contempt for writers who, like Maria Edgeworth, revised to the furthest limit of the margin, and declared that "the most marked mannerists are precisely those whose manuscripts show most erasures and their proof-sheets most alterations."

The stories were widely read and discussed, but

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they can scarcely be said to have converted the entire nation. There were still a number of legislators who disbelieved in free trade. There were also, curiously enough, some really intelligent men who disbelieved in the law of self-interest and the law of competition as sufficient for the happiness and health of the nation. Even the apostles of orthodox political economy, like John Stuart Mill, shivered as they watched Harriet translating each article of the Ricardian creed into terms of human experience with a fidelity that they found embarrassing. Carlyle, who detested political economy, wrote to Mill that Miss Martineau and her precious Tales "are a sign of this Time and this Country." He hoped the works might perhaps do good, by which he meant that he hoped people who read them with any attention would see for themselves the absurdity of the *laissez-faire* system carried to its furthest logical conclusions. Mill, who believed that *laissez-faire* still had useful possibilities, was obliged to agree that the Tales carried the doctrine to ridiculous lengths, and he resented the way in which the name of "a mere tyro like Harriet Martineau" was coupled with the names of real contributors to economic science, like himself. Harriet became conscious, as time went on, of criticism, but she was upheld by faith. The *Quarterly*, the *Edinburgh* and even the *Westminster Review* could not shake

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her. "I trust," she wrote to her mother, "to disprove Whig prognostications by completing my work regularly, rationally and consistently; and the Radicals will presently find I am not under their control. Here I am, placed in an unparalleled position, left to maintain it by myself, and (believe me) *able* to maintain it; and by God's grace I will come out as the free servant of his truth. This language is not too high for the occasion."

For one part of the divine message, in especial, Harriet required all the courage that consciousness of her unparalleled position could give her. One entire Tale must be devoted to demonstrating to the proletariat that their hope of prosperity was dependent on the restriction of the number of their children. The subject was admittedly difficult for a modest young woman of Harriet's epoch to tackle. But the amiable and benevolent Mr. Malthus was one of her most respected friends. She could hear everything he said without her ear-trumpet, in spite of his cleft palate. She asked him one day if he had ever suffered from the abuse so liberally addressed to him.

"Only just at first."

Had it kept him awake?

"Never after the first fortnight."

Harriet was encouraged. She urged the "preventive" check upon the growth of population

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wherever she appropriately could. In one of the Tales, an admirable young doctor, who resigns his post as medical officer to the lying-in hospital because the very existence of such a place encourages the poor to have children, suggests that all the people of the country should be called together in churches and chapels to hear a proclamation that no child born to any couple married within a year from that date, and no illegitimate child born within two years from the same date, shall ever be entitled to parish assistance. But the story completely consecrated to the exposition of Malthus's principles is called *Weal and Woe in Garveloch*. While she wrote it, perspiration streamed down Harriet's face, although she knew that there was not a line in it unfit for reading aloud in the family circle. She was aware, she said, "that some evil associations had gathered round the subject," but she had not informed herself further. The tale deals with the fortunes of the population of an island off the coast of Scotland. Encouraged by the occupation provided by an opulent fish company, the people of Garveloch increase happily and carelessly. But lean years of bad harvests and deserted fisheries come, when the thriftiest are reduced with the thriftless to a lowering diet of shell-fish and die from fever. The lesson of this misery is learnt and expressed by a prudent young

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man, who makes up his mind to leave off asking the attractive widow he loves to marry him, and to remain single all his life rather than to increase the number of mouths needing bread and fish. The widow, relieved of the ungracious duty of refusing his offers, is free to value his “disinterested friendship.”

It is abundantly clear that Miss Martineau never contemplated any kind of preventive check upon population except the effect of late marriages or complete celibacy upon lives of otherwise untarnished chastity. But her innocence was no shield against attack. The most resounding of the attacks was made in the *Quarterly* (No. 49, 1833), by Lockhart and Croker, the latter avowedly out, in his nastiest manner, “to tomahawk Miss Martineau.” It was a stupid piece of work, which missed most of its opportunities. Harriet’s simple remedy for too many babies might very well have been laughed out of court for its inadequacy as a defence against the turbulence of passion, or it might have been plausibly argued that wherever the “mild preventive check” was at work it was demonstrably restricting the reproduction of the prudent and virtuous, while leaving the vicious and weak to breed at will. But her reviewers chose to take their stand on other ground and to declare themselves “shocked, nay disgusted, with many of

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the unfeminine and mischievous doctrines on the principles of social welfare, of which these tales are made the vehicle.” They asked if the young lady had picked up her information in her conferences with the Lord Chancellor. They quoted, rather inappropriately, Moore’s “She Politician”:

“ ’Tis my fortune to know a lean Benthamite spinster,
A maid who her faith in old Jeremy puts,
Who talks with a lisp of ‘the last new Westminster,’
And hopes you’re delighted with ‘Mill upon Gluts.’ ”

“Did Miss Martineau,” they added, “sit for the picture? But no—such a character is nothing to a *female Malthusian*. A *woman* who thinks *child-bearing a crime against society!* An *unmarried woman* who declaims against *marriage!!* A *young woman* who deprecates charity and a provision for the *poor!!!!*”

Harriet was not unnaturally surprised to be told, after this, that Lockhart had been down to the office at the last moment, to “cut out all the worst passages” of the review. Her very reasonable comment was that it was not easy to conceive what he could have cut out that was worse than what he left in.

But although the attack on her moral principles was as absurd as it was ill-natured, Lockhart and Croker had no difficulty in exposing the essential

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weakness of the Tales, which was simply that they were true to formulas rather than to life, the so-called laws of political economy being brought into operation at a vast expense of probability. This was sound criticism, for Harriet's passionate faith in the new science had completely blinded her to the evidence of the facts of human existence. The reviewers ended by reminding her that propaganda by fiction was by no means such a novelty as her preface announced, and advised her to "study the works of a lady who, with immeasurably greater abilities in every way, was her predecessor in the line she considers so wholly original—the illustrating by fiction the natural laws of social welfare," the difference between herself and the other being "that the moral of Miss Edgeworth's tales is naturally suggested to the reader by the course of the events of which he peruses the narrative; that of Miss Martineau is embodied in elaborate dialogues or most unnatural incidents with which her stories are interlarded and interrupted, to the utter destruction of the interest of all but the most detached bits of them." The last thrust went home, and Harriet was not quite clever enough to disguise her resentment. In addition to condemning Miss Edgeworth's careful revisions, she suggested that it must have been easy for her to write in the presence of the rest of the family, for "I can

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imagine that Miss Edgeworth's stories would not require very much concentration."

Warned in advance of what was to be expected of the *Quarterly*, Harriet forbade all the members of her family to read the article, which she went through conscientiously herself, "marking all the lies in the margin," for the benefit of a clergyman who lent her the number. On the whole, the publication of the review, with its hint of impropriety, stimulated the sale of the series, and the attack, seconded by a caricature and a scurrilous article in *Fraser's Magazine* (see Note 1, p. 242), assured a wide notoriety for the author. Carlyle, still at Craigenputtock, confessed that "so much mere babbling pro and con has taken place about poor Miss M. that, whenever I see her name, I feel a kind of temptation to skip. She is the most intelligible of women; also the most measurable."

Through all the babble, Harriet worked on industriously and if some reviewers were rude many more were polite. She had successes in the highest social circles. The Duchess of Kent was encouraged to procure the Tales for her daughter, and Lord Durham was glad to be able to tell Miss Martineau that the Princess Victoria was enjoying her readings immensely and was particularly attached to *Ella of Garveloch*. Harriet's conscience urged her to do what she could to qualify the Princess's

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pleasure. She expressed the hope that the young lady was not reading for the sake of the stories alone, since one in her position should understand the summaries of the principles, so conveniently placed at the end of each Tale, and should be required to trace the action of these principles in the stories. In a few days Durham wrote to tell her that the Princess was having her due dose of principles, and shortly afterwards the Duchess of Kent, having had Miss Martineau and her ear-trumpet pointed out to her at a concert, sent Sir John Conroy to convey through the instrument a message of thanks for the usefulness of the books to the education of the Princess.

Nor was Kensington Palace the only royal residence where the volumes were read. Mrs. Marcet, who enjoyed Harriet's renown with a generosity untouched by any professional jealousy, told her that the King of France had ordered a copy of the series for each member of his family and had expressed a desire to have the work translated for use in the schools. But the numbers were not complete when the King gave his order. The twelfth, *French Wines and Politics*, with its unflattering portrait of the King's father, the Duc d'Orléans, had not appeared. No sooner was it published than asthmatic old Mrs. Marcet came pounding up Harriet's stairs. "I thought I had told you," she

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panted, "but I suppose you did not hear me. I thought I had told you that the King of the French read all your stories and made all his family read them; and now you have been writing about *Égalité*, and they will never read you again." Harriet, always quick to seize an opportunity of exhibiting her principles in action, replied that she was no respecter of persons and that crowned heads must take their chances of being wounded with their subjects. She added that perhaps the King of France might agree with her estimate of his precious father. But Mrs. Marcet sighed. How could Harriet expect to be presented at the Tuilleries after this? Perhaps Harriet never did expect it. She said so. In any case she showed no disposition to check her disrespectful pen. The very next month she offended the Czar of Russia, who had followed the example of Louis Philippe in ordering the Tales to be used in schools. This time it was a story about exiled Poles in Siberia which stirred the imperial reader to a handsome exhibition of temper. He had every copy of the Tales either burnt or deported and forbade Miss Martineau to cross the boundaries of his Empire. The Emperor of Austria, in sympathy with the Czar so far as Poles were concerned, followed his example in forbidding the dangerous woman to enter the country, and posted a full description of her appearance at

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the frontier stations with notices about the other bad characters who were not to be allowed to sneak across the border.

If Harriet irritated monarchs by insufficient recognition of the divine right, she irritated other people by her rampant individualism. Robert Owen, whose belief in co-operation and socialism as an immediate means to national salvation was at least as strong as Harriet's faith in unlimited personal liberty and unrestricted competition, felt it his duty to call on her frequently to expose the necessity of his creed, for he too had a divine mission. She countered his demonstrations with her own assertion of the necessity of Benthamism. In the course of their conversations she observed that Mr. Owen appeared to have an imperfect knowledge of the teaching of the Bible, a book which Harriet seems to have imagined to be a sound source of economic doctrine. When she asked him the reason of this sad gap in his mental and moral equipment, he replied that he had learnt too many texts in childhood to be able to read the Bible with any pleasure in later life. But he offered Miss Martineau a bargain. If she would read *Hamlet*, "with a running comment of Necessarian doctrine in her mind," he, on his side, would go carefully through the Gospels. Both parties carried out their contract. But since Harriet was already a convert to Necessarianism

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and Owen already a socialist, their study produced no noticeable alteration in the views of either. In later years, when her opinions about the management of the world had undergone considerable changes, Harriet sometimes found herself wondering whether the sweet-tempered enthusiast who bored her so unendurably by his gentle persistence might not have been nearer the truth than the economists. But at the time Owen could do nothing to cloud her serene satisfaction in her monthly numbers. She passed without hesitation from one series to another. Political Economy was followed by Taxation and Taxation by the Poor Law. In the intervals of writing she went from friend to friend talking. She enjoyed dinner-parties, where she was observed by at least one fellow-guest to be exceedingly happy laying down the law on a variety of subjects and tossing the flexible tube of her ear-trumpet about the table from one guest to another. Her friends were trained to ask her to dinner, even Rogers, who so much preferred asking people to breakfast, and in whose favour Harriet did occasionally relax her rule, since his house was only a little way across the Park, and he urged her to walk through the garden gate and straight through the breakfast-room window. She arrived, fresh and energetic, ready to confute any other guest, even the Dean of St.

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Paul's, on a moral issue. It was at one of these breakfasts that Milman observed that the vain were happy, since they fed on praise, dismissed censure and had no heart to trouble them. Harriet informed him at once that he was mistaken in supposing that people without hearts could be happy. Jeffrey, undistracted by Mrs. Austin or any other pretty woman, remarked very solemnly that Miss Martineau was indeed right, whereupon Milman "set to work to batter his egg and devour it" without replying, a retreat which encouraged Harriet to feel that she had set the Church in its place. Rogers, at that period a lively, spiteful skeleton of about seventy, was amused by her earnest convictions and warmed by her vitality. "Who but the Martineau," he said to his friends, as they walked along Fludyer Street after one of her evening parties, "could have drawn us into such a hole?" The parties in Fludyer Street were always well attended by serious politicians, journalists and historians, and relieved by the occasional presence of the ancient Miss Berrys, whose rouge and powder, wigs and oaths, were in striking contrast to their hostess's unadorned simplicity. The Miss Berrys had added Harriet to their stock of amusements, and she was glad enough to know such characters, although she made it clear that it was no use for the old ladies to give her a general invitation to look in on them

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any evening she might be passing if she saw a light over their lower shutters. Miss Martineau was only to be engaged by express invitation. So she was expressly invited and found the parties quite agreeable, though "rather blue." Not so tiresomely blue, however, as those arranged by Lady Mary Shepherd, who held her head high because she had been assured on the best authority that there was not another in England to match it for a knowledge of Cause and Effect. Lady Mary had the disconcerting habit of flinging her gauntlet before those she thought worthy of her powers. "Come now," she is reported to have said to Ricardo, when she met him in a country house, "let us have a little discussion about Space." But Harriet's account of the only party of Lady Mary's which she attended hardly strikes the reader of her *Autobiography* as a very true blue. She passed the greater part of the evening by the side of Lady Stepney, whose position as widow of the Duke of York's Groom of the Bedchamber assured her footing in society, and who had just made £700 by a novel and spent it all on a pair of diamond earrings. She invited Harriet to admire the earrings. Then, sweeping from a consideration of earrings to observations on ears, she assured Miss Martineau that the dreadful Reform Bill would never have been passed if the Duke of

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Wellington had possessed her high moral courage and carried an ear-trumpet. He would never have made his inflammatory anti-reform speech if he could have heard what his colleagues were saying all round him. Harriet was enchanted by this explanation and afterwards repeated the joke to Lady Durham, who passed it on to Lord Grey. Grey, too experienced to believe in limits to human credulity and sincerely anxious that Miss Martineau should be under no misapprehension, made it his business to send her a special message to inform her that even if the Duke of Wellington had carried an ear-trumpet, parliamentary reform would have come sooner or later.

Having disposed of the Reform Bill, Lady Stepney began upon Captain Ross, the Arctic explorer, for whom a vacant armchair near Harriet's seat was being reserved. The Arctic explorers, Lady Stepney explained, had been through incredible hardships, which proved—did it not?—that the Deity was everywhere, and more particularly in barren places. All the same, it hardly seemed right to send men to such places for no better reason than to discover the North Pole. “They *say*, you know,” she added, “they *say* that they have found the magnetic pole. But you and I know what a magnet is. *We* know that a little thing like that would be pulled out of its place in the middle of

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the sea." Harriet left the party intending to read one of the £700 novels, but she never carried out the intention. She might have found *The New Road to Ruin* less rewarding than she had reason to anticipate, for, according to Miss Mitford, everything published under Lady Stepney's name had been rewritten before it went to the printers by Miss Landon, who turned "grammar and spelling that would have disgraced a lady's-maid" into something like English.

From that companion and that party Harriet escaped as soon as she could, but she forgave Lady Mary to the extent of accepting a subsequent invitation to lunch when the request for her company was explained as due to the urgent desire of Lord Henley, Lady Mary's nephew, to consult Miss Martineau about the proper way to dispose of £300 a year in charity. The appeal to give advice to a philanthropist perplexed by the moral of her Tales was irresistible. Harriet went to meet Lord Henley without any suspicion of the influence that encounter was to have on the course of her life.

V

THE CLEAR-EYED PRESENCE

HARRIET MARTINEAU's progress as a public influence was steadier and smoother than her career as a daughter and sister. Her earnest desire to be admittedly useful to the world appeared to be abundantly gratified by the circulation of her didactic Tales. Every page she wrote was freighted with a message sure of a wide circle of attentive readers. But while she expanded to the measure of her own ample conception of the part Providence had called her to perform, her mother found the rôle of proud and inconspicuous parent increasingly difficult to support gracefully. At Norwich she had been neglected because she could speak nothing but English; in London she found herself expected to play a soft harmonious accompaniment to Harriet's loquacious performances with the ear-trumpet. Mrs. Martineau, like other mothers, disliked to feel that she was superfluous, and she had, besides, her own view of the way Harriet was conducting her social life. Every day seemed to increase the young woman's importance

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and independence, yet, with all her renown and her prospects, there were no material advantages that might be shared by the family. She flatly refused to move from the little house in Fludyer Street to some place more suitable for entertaining her numerous acquaintance. She virtuously resisted all proposals for pledging her earnings in advance. In short, Mrs. Martineau found her to be as obstinate as she had been in childhood, with the difference that she had lost much of her sense of the duty of implicit obedience. The resulting situation was uncomfortable for both, but it was relieved for some time by Harriet's absence from England.

She had made up her mind to go abroad for a holiday, on the conclusion of her various series of Tales, and was planning a tour through Italy and Switzerland when she accepted Lady Mary Shepherd's invitation to meet Lord Henley and give him the benefit of her advice about the troublesome problem of his philanthropic expenditure. The poor man was very much perturbed. He confessed at once that his gifts to charities had been directed by nothing better than uninformed benevolence until Miss Martineau's Tales had opened his eyes to the mischief he was doing. He had immediately dropped all subscriptions not devoted to Education, Benefit Societies and Emigration. Did

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Miss Martineau think he had done right and could she help him further? Harriet, a little disconcerted by his excessive agitation, considered and advised. When she had come to an end, Lord Henley asked leave to offer a little advice in his turn. He had heard that she intended to travel. Might he urge her to give up Italy and go instead to the United States? She asked why he made so original a proposal? He replied that it was because "the least happy classes of society" were treated there on principles of justice and mercy not understood in England. Would not Miss Martineau see for herself and then come back to reform the prisons of her own country? Harriet was impressed by his words. They sounded a new call at the very moment when the mission to proclaim the gospel of political economy might be considered to be fulfilled. She felt bound to take the suggestion seriously. No doubt the people wanted penal reform, and if she could give it to them she must. The evils of the British system could be illustrated in a new series of tales, and contrasted with American improvements. She decided to go to the United States and to stay there for two years.

Introductions to prominent Americans were immediately showered on her by her friends, with few exceptions. One exception was the aged Godwin, who sighed deeply when she went to visit him

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in his snug little home under the roof of the Houses of Parliament. He sighed because he was such an old man and it was the last time Miss Martineau would take tea with him. He would be dead before she came back. She would only be able to visit his grave. He was right in supposing that he would be dead. He was not even able to finish his long life in peace in the house he enjoyed by virtue of his position as Yeoman Usher, for within three months of Harriet's departure the Houses of Parliament were burnt down. But no suspicion of that catastrophe darkened his mind as he showed her the notched tallies of the tax-collectors which were to be the cause of the conflagration. When he had done the honours of the place, he told Harriet that he was busy writing letters to all his American friends for her to take with her. She thanked him for his kindness. Evidently her path was to be handsomely decorated all the way with introductions. But Godwin repented. He called on the following Sunday to retract the offer. He had been thinking it over. It had struck him as possible that even on the far side of the Atlantic Ocean Miss Martineau might be known as a propagandist of the execrable doctrines of Bentham and Mill. If he furnished her with introductions, his friends might perhaps conclude that he himself had been converted from Political Justice to Political Economy. Harriet

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assured him that if he thought his reputation was in danger he was wise not to introduce her to his sensitive friends. She was already well provided with letters as well as with every other necessity for travelling, including a companion, "not only well educated but remarkably clever, and, above all, supremely rational, and with a faultless temper." This paragon bore the cost of the voyage herself, and in return for her travelling expenses in the United States, managed all the business of arranging the tour and supplied every defect of Harriet's ears and memory by her own quick hearing and retentive observation.

During the six weeks in a sailing packet which intervened between the farewells at Liverpool and the welcome to New York, Harriet had time to write, in her incommodeous cabin, a chapter for a book to be called *How to Observe*, and in drawing up rules for others to lay down the lines for her own discovery of America. She was encumbered with little previous knowledge except an elementary acquaintance with the number and size of the States and the phraseology of the Declaration of Independence. This document offered her a unique opportunity for measuring an entire people by the standard set by their own published principles. She resolved to strip herself of British prejudice and to judge Americans solely with reference to the

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Declaration of Independence. This was the method that she had used in her Political Economy Tales, and if the United States had been peopled by creations of her pen instead of by independently breathing and acting beings, she might have achieved as striking a demonstration of the necessity of the principles adopted by the founders of the Union as she had of the principles revealed by the Almighty to Mill and Malthus and Ricardo. Since, however, Americans were in full existence and compounded of no more perfect material than were the men of other nations, she was pained to note a number of divergences from those libertarian and egalitarian professions embodied in the Constitution. Politicians appeared to seek office from self-interest, a motive less admired by the makers of the Constitution than by the founders of Political Economy. Newspapers were even more "profligate" in America than in England, citizens were apathetic in the exercise of their political privileges, disregard of the law was shown by repeated mobbings, burnings and lynchings, slaves and women were excluded from that equal treatment which should be the right of all. But in spite of these backslidings, Harriet found much to admire in America, in addition to its prisons and cemeteries. In comparison with perfection, the United States might leave a good deal to be desired, but in comparison with the feudal traditions of

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Europe, there were great advances to be observed by a democratic Radical.

Her observations were chiefly conducted from the sheltering homes of Unitarian ministers, who enjoyed a social prestige beyond that of their English colleagues. She travelled widely during her two years. She went North and South. She spent adequate periods in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Boston, Charleston and New Orleans. She went West to the shores of Lake Michigan, where she saw Chicago, "raw and bare, standing on the high prairie above the lake-shore," and guarded by a detachment of troops for fear of an Indian invasion. She looked at Milwaukee, a town of four hundred inhabitants of whom seven were women. The first edition of a Milwaukee newspaper issued shortly after her visit contained an appeal to the ladies of more thickly populated districts to remember the hundreds of eligible bachelors in Milwaukee.

Wherever she went, Harriet took notes, although she declared that she had not decided to write a book about America. This announcement was received with the reserve it required, and everybody took trouble to supply her with information. She saw prisons and factories in the North, plantations in the South. She travelled in public stage coaches, in private coaches known as "exclusive extras," on

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horseback, in steamboats and even in railway trains. This last kind of locomotion, a recent invention, she found excessively exhilarating. She did not mind the noise due to the stone sleepers, and the only disadvantage she noted was the constant shower of large sparks from the wood fuel. After a ride of thirteen miles, her gown had thirteen holes burnt in it and she saw a lady's shawl burnt to destruction on her shoulders. She attended weddings and christenings, orations and slave auctions. She was particularly pleased with the burgeoning industrial enterprise of the North. Believing, as she did, that machinery would create an earthly paradise, she rejoiced over each factory that met her eyes. She was distressed to find that the Americans considered farming a nobler occupation than machine-tending, but she comforted herself by reflecting that the old-fashioned prejudice would soon die a natural death. Meanwhile, most of the work in the factories was left to the women and children and newly-arrived immigrants, among whom the Scotch and the Irish were more welcome than the English, who "are always on the watch lest they should be asked to do more than they stipulated for." The wages of the girls employed in some cotton mills in New Jersey amounted to two or three dollars a week and children could earn one dollar, a fact which Miss Martineau noted with unalloyed satis-

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faction. She saw a whole street of houses built with the earnings of the girls, "some with piazzas and green venetian blinds." The girls worked about seventy hours a week, and "all look like well-dressed young ladies. The health is good, or rather," she went on, feeling that there was no real standard of good health among American women, "it is no worse than it is elsewhere." The only regrettable feature of the factory system appeared to be the taste for constant companionship displayed by the young women. To the Englishwoman, solitude, in sufficient doses, seemed essential to mental health. If these young people preferred playing about together in their spare time and sleeping six or eight in a dormitory, it was time, Harriet thought, for someone to interfere. Individual liberty should not be permitted to flower into gregarious intimacy. She would have liked to inaugurate the discipline of the monastic cell.

The general bad health of American women was, she insisted, due to lack of fresh air and hard exercise. Addicted herself to twenty- or thirty-mile stretches over the English hills, she could not suffer gladly the complacency of women who were not ashamed to confess that they could not walk a mile. One of the ladies went so far as to admit that she thought the lives of most American women were shortened by their inactivity, but added that it did

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not matter, since they were not aware of it. Miss Martineau was not the kind of listener to agree that it did not matter. She could not look upon humanity as a congeries of unimportant microbes. Each woman was a soul to be saved and a body to be strengthened. She protested against the "Mohammedan acquiescence" in bad health and bad hygienic conditions. The only exercise the ladies seemed to enjoy was sleighing—a most dangerous method of taking cold air for people who "dry up their whole frames in the heat of fires of anthracite, never breathing the outward air but in going to church and in stepping in and out of the carriage in going to parties." The excuse for the American women was, of course, to be found in the behaviour of the American Government, which, while professing to believe that all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, left half the white population of the country, as well as all the black, unenfranchised and irresponsible. Since she was convinced that virtue could blossom only in the air of freedom, she was not surprised to find American women with their intellect cramped, their health ruined, their weakness encouraged and their strength, where it existed, punished. They were scarcely better off than in England. There were the same two resources for women, marriage and religion. And the best that

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she could say of American marriages was that the system was a slight improvement on the European. But even in the United States it appeared that marriages might be contracted for other reasons than romantic love, and to a young middle-class Englishwoman of Harriet's generation no other reason seemed anything but revolting. She was shocked, too, to discover that a number of married people lived in boarding-houses instead of in homes of their own. Coming, as she did, from a country where the privacy of home life had not yet been threatened by a shortage of domestic labour, she found this practice hard to reconcile with her ideal of the married state.

She longed to provide the passive minds and inert bodies of American women with education, responsibility and exercise. She thirsted to see them enfranchised. If her views on this subject met less bitter opposition than her views on slavery, it was because female suffrage was not at the time a question of practical politics. A number of high-principled men agreed with Jefferson that even in the purest and most equal democracy, in which all the inhabitants of a country should meet together to transact their business, "there would yet be excluded from their deliberations, (1) Infants, (2) Women, who, to prevent depravation of morals and ambiguity of issue, could not mix promiscuously

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in the public meetings of men." When Miss Martineau flung down the Declaration of Independence, her critics pointed out that the social compact could apply only to persons who fulfilled all their duties in their natural situation. The only natural situation for a woman was the situation of wife and mother, in which position, "from causes which it would be indelicate to enumerate," she would necessarily be excluded from access to a true knowledge of political affairs. Women, on the other hand, who were not occupied as mothers, could have no claim to be considered as anything but superfluous visitors, permitted by courtesy to pass their useless lives as the guests of the nations into which they happened to be born.

The weak foundations of the defences improvised to meet Miss Martineau's attack were in themselves evidence that the masculine position was not seriously threatened. There was no great need, in 1837, to look carefully for plausible arguments against the strange claims spoken of as the rights of women. It was a sufficiently rare act of condescension to look at all. Harriet was not discouraged. She was a suffragist, but a patient and ladylike one. While consistently maintaining the right of her sex to be educated and enfranchised, she believed in preparing women for responsibilities they might never be called to assume rather than in urging their

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promotion to positions for which they had not been fitted by training. She had small sympathy with Mary Wollstonecraft and her methods, regarding her as "a poor victim of passion, with no control over her own peace." Women who really cared to improve the condition and chances of their sex must show themselves rational and dispassionate as well as devoted. She was more concerned to augment the supply of busy and efficient spinsters, who might be trusted to carry on useful social work without desiring to increase the population of the world, than to uphold the rights of women to any personal satisfaction of their sentimental or biological needs. She believed that the time would certainly come when women would have a voice in framing the laws they obeyed, but she declared herself content to wait, and although she regarded her own political disabilities as absurd, she made no complaint. "The Wollstonecraft order set to work at the other end, and, as I think, with infinite mischief; and, for my part, I do not wish to have anything to do with them." The women of the United States had, she found, more of the machinery of freedom than the women of England. She instanced the control of their own property allowed in most States to married women, their legal claim to a due share of their husband's goods, and the divorce facilities, which she regarded not as an aid to changes of

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partnership but as a deterrent to conjugal infidelity. If the American women were not, in fact, free, it was largely their own fault.

These opinions and many others Harriet published after she was back in England. In the meantime she was creating as well as receiving impressions in America. She was received everywhere with that enthusiastic hospitality and flattering attention which still combine to turn the heads of English visitors to the United States. For fifteen months she passed from triumph to triumph. Trains of callers besieged her in New York. Special orders were issued for her baggage to be passed untouched through the customs. When she was seen in a Unitarian chapel, the preacher, Furness, came straight down from the pulpit to offer her the hospitality of his home in Philadelphia. Margaret Fuller hoped that she had found in her the friend she had never yet had, the friend who would "comprehend me wholly, mentally and morally." At Stockbridge, where she stayed twice with the Sedgwicks, she was "Lafayetted," all business being suspended in her honour. She enjoyed her success and was charmed by the Sedgwicks, particularly by Catherine, "the beloved and gentle queen of the little community." Catherine Sedgwick was delighted with her guest in her turn, and gave several pages of her Journal to analysing Harriet's special

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appeal and gift. She concluded, with rare discrimination, that her strength lay in the fact that “her spirit and influence have been in harmony with the spirit of the age—because she has gone with the current.” Comparing her powers with those of other distinguished women, Catherine Sedgwick decided that Mrs. Barbauld possessed more genius, Miss Edgeworth more various talents, Mrs. Somerville greater scientific attainments, Mrs. Hemans a more lofty imagination, and Mrs. Jameson more general cultivation embodied in “more poetic, more drawing-room, if not as vigorous a style.” Miss Martineau, however, outshone all these contemporaries in her single-minded devotion to the material and moral welfare of the labouring classes. As for her appearance, Miss Sedgwick considered that her dress was “simple, inexpensive and appropriate. Her voice is too low-toned, but agreeable, the suitable organ of a refined spirit. Her manners, without any elegance, are pleasing, natural and kind. She seldom speaks unless addressed, but in reply to a single touch she pours out a rich stream.” The stream was not remarkable for brilliance, apparently she was not in the habit of casting her observations in any very memorable form, but she had a fund of information on an almost inconceivably great variety of topics. Her sympathies were quick, “enthusiasms not always mani-

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festly supported by reason, now and then *bordering* on the dogmatical." Miss Sedgwick added that she did not think her visitor so much conceited, as "aware of her own superiority, and perhaps a little too frank upon this point. . . . The most interesting part of her character is the sincerity and earnestness of her religion, her lively effective faith, her knowledge of the scriptures, and her delight in them as the records of her best friend."

The friendship was blighted, after Harriet's return to England, by Miss Sedgwick's not unnatural resentment of a footnote in *Society in America*. Harriet, who felt that Catherine Sedgwick's tact amounted to moral cowardice, held her up to reprobation in the note because, in deference to the wishes of her editor, she had changed a passage in one of her books in which an otherwise godly family was described as enjoying a sail on Sunday afternoon. "If an author's convictions are to be unrepresented, to avoid shocking religious prejudices," commented Harriet, "there is a surrender, not only of the author's noblest prerogative, but of his highest duty." Miss Sedgwick could see no reason for the publicity given to a matter which was, she considered, between her and her editor. Relations between the friends were less cordial than before, and by the time she came to write her *Autobiography*, Harriet had discovered that she and Miss Sedgwick

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"were too opposite in our natures, in many of our views, and in some of our principles, to be very congenial companions."

As she passed on her way through the Eastern and Southern States, reverberations of her passage spread in widening circles. "The United States seemed for the moment a mere whispering gallery for the transmission of her opinions," declared an admiring friend who was living in Boston at the time. "She awakened whole societies to new and important ideas about health. She had sown deep in a thousand hearts new and grand thoughts of the nature, sphere, duties and rights of women; and wherever she went, the splendour of truth and the importance of moral independence were talked of and felt as never before." Among a people peculiarly susceptible to the appeal of moral sentiment, Harriet had an immense and deserved success. She saw every indication that Providence had granted her prayer for a career of "eminent usefulness."

An enchanted echo of the progress is to be found in a letter written by Samuel Gilman, Harriet's Unitarian host at Charleston, South Carolina, to his brother-in-law, Ellis G. Loring, at Boston. Mrs. Gilman, who had undertaken to write an account of her daughter's visit to Mrs. Martineau in London, found that her husband had said so exactly what she would like to say herself that she could do no better

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for her beloved guest's mother than send her a copy of the letter. Both the minister and his wife had found in Harriet a woman "whose moral qualities as much outshine her intellectual as these last do those of the ordinary run of mankind. . . . On account of the necessary irregularity and dissipation of her present mode of life, I gave her full liberty to keep her own hours, and be free from the rules of the family. But no; she found out our hours of family prayer, and always came in most punctually with her favourite Bible, the Porteusian edition, which she reads more than any other book. . . . Dining out frequently and passing the evening at one or two parties, as soon as she came home at night, and had read at my request a devotional hymn in her own sweet and primitive manner, she would take Caroline on one side and me on the other, and there, fixed eye to eye and soul to soul, would she enchain and enchant us until long after midnight, when we were obliged to tear ourselves away." Many of her Charleston acquaintances sent her presents, one gift taking the pleasant form of a set of handkerchiefs marked with various emblems of her character or fame. Six carriages were placed at her disposal. The daughter of the house composed a "Martineau cotillon" in her honour. Mr. Gilman bought his wife a set of the Political Economy Tales, and in each volume

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Harriet was persuaded to inscribe “a precious bit of history or remark respecting the Tales.”

It was the man to whom this letter was addressed who succeeded, a short time afterwards, in capturing Harriet Martineau for the abolitionists, then a despised and maligned body of persevering enthusiasts. Always openly opposed to slavery, Harriet had not been so extreme in the expression of her views as to alienate her hosts in the South. They hoped, perhaps, to convert her to their own view that “the institution of Slavery, *per se*, existed in all ages and from the earliest periods, under the immediate sanction of heaven.” She was not converted, but she listened to their arguments and advanced her own temperately. Mrs. Gilman, herself an ardent supporter of the institution of slavery, loved and honoured her guest none the less devotedly. She was excusably indignant when her name was published, forty years later, in the *Autobiography*, as that of the foolish companion (already anonymously pilloried in the books on America) who had accompanied Harriet to the Charleston slave-market, where she had taken the opportunity to declare that in her opinion one race must always be subordinate to the other, and that if the blacks had the upper hand she would have no objection to being put up to auction with her children. Mrs. Gilman was eighty-two years old when the

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Autobiography was posthumously published, but she sprang to her pen and indited a spirited letter to the *Boston Transcript* (2). "Miss Martineau," she wrote, "brought letters of introduction to my family as a Christian woman. She was welcomed with entire trust as a guest, and seemed to value our social efforts. As a return for unstinted hospitality she left for publication a description of her hostess which she knew would blight my name." The absurd misrepresentations of her hostess's opinions might, Mrs. Gilman allowed, be the fault of "an uncertain ear-trumpet, connected, I fear, with a predetermined political will, concealed at the time by an air of sympathy with our heart-whole welcome," but for the scene in the slave-market she could recognise no possible foundation in fact. Never in all her eighty-two years of earthly pilgrimage had she been to a slave auction. Never would any Charleston lady have intruded on the business marts where slave-dealing took place. She added that Miss Martineau had, some years before her death, asked leave "through her editor" to publish the letter of eulogy sent to her mother at the time of her visit (the letter quoted above). Mrs. Gilman gave her consent, "entirely ignorant of the serpent slander that lay coiled in her manuscripts," a picturesque reference to the fact that the *Autobiography* was written many years before it was published,

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and that the paragraph about her Charleston hostess was certainly in existence when permission to print that hostess's letter was asked.

Mrs. Gilman's annoyance was very natural. The tone of Harriet's references to her is so contemptuous as to leave the reader wondering how either she or her Memorialist could have thought of asking to publish, in the same book, that innocent tribute of undiluted admiration. But in surmising that during those nightly soul-to-soul and eye-to-eye talks Harriet was concealing her true opinions under a false show of sympathy, Mrs. Gilman forgot that the conversion to the cause of the abolitionists, which altered her whole attitude towards the South and its inhabitants, took place after her departure from Charleston. While she was staying with the Gilmans, Harriet probably enjoyed their company as much as they enjoyed hers.

It was while she was in Kentucky, on her way northward, that Harriet received a letter from Boston, written in a flowing hand and remonstrating with her, in phrases that she afterwards recognised as both terse and eloquent, for being blinded and beguiled by slave-holders. On inquiring who the unknown and impertinent scribe might be who signed herself "Maria Weston Chapman," she was told that Mrs. Chapman was one of the most fanatical leaders of the bloodthirsty tribe of aboli-

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tionists. Harriet had heard little good of the abolitionists and was inclined to dislike their methods of advertising the rights of negroes as heartily as she disliked Mary Wollstonecraft's methods of advertising the rights of women. She returned "a repulsive, cold and hard reply," and the correspondence was closed. It was not the first time that Mrs. Chapman had made a vain effort to establish relations with Miss Martineau. She had led a deputation from the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society to the house where she was staying during her earlier visit to Boston. On the way, the members of the deputation nervously rehearsed what they should say into the ear-trumpet. They had heard tales of how "grey-headed statesmen lost their presence of mind as they took it from her hand." It was perhaps a relief to some of the party, though assuredly not to Mrs. Chapman, that Miss Martineau was not able to see them.

She was more skilfully approached when she went back to Boston in the autumn of 1835. By that time she had made the acquaintance of some of the milder abolitionists, in particular of Mr. E. G. Loring and Dr. Follen, an exiled German reformer, whose high principles and enlightened sentiments, expressed as they were in rich Teutonic diction, were most agreeable to Harriet's taste. She was very glad to discover that Dr. Follen and his wife, a

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true Boston Cabot, and Mr. Loring and his wife, were such excellent persons. She began to think better of the irrepressible Garrison and his followers. She was passing through Boston on the day when he was assaulted at a meeting of the Ladies' Society, dragged through the streets to be tarred and feathered, and only rescued by being taken off to gaol. She was genuinely horrified, and she expressed herself ready to go to a meeting and hear what the abolitionists had to say. The opportunity came shortly afterwards, while she was staying at Cambridge. The Ladies' Society invited her to another meeting, to be held with all possible precautions in a private house. She accepted the invitation, and went, before the meeting, to dine with her friends the Lorings. In their house she met Mrs. Chapman for the first time face to face.

She was immediately subjugated. Mrs. Chapman was noble, but she was, if possible, even more beautiful than she was noble. At the time of that meeting she was about thirty years old, a few years younger than Harriet, and in the prime of her magnificent vitality. She is said to have had a genius for appearance and she certainly had a keen sense for histrionic effect. Many years afterwards, when abolition had triumphed and she had retired into family life, she would carefully set the drawing-room as a stage for Shakespeare readings to her grand-



MARIA WESTON CHAPMAN

From the daguerreotype in the Boston Public Library

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children, covering the couch that was Cæsar's bier with funereal drapery and inserting a bit of marble to represent his Roman nose. She refrained, for the sake of her voice, from eating dinner before the readings and would take nothing but the juice of a lemon. If she did these things for her grandchildren, what would she not do in her youth and maturity for the cause of which she was known as a living embodiment? If Garrison was the chief in command, Mrs. Chapman was the standard-bearer. Those who distrusted her suggested that she was his evil genius. But she was rarely distrusted. She was always radiant, well dressed, "smiling, dominant, ready to meet all comers." She enjoyed perfect health and a clear conscience, for she was so utterly one with the cause that she was unembarrassed by scruples or misgivings. She was worshipped for her courage and adored, it can hardly be doubted, for her looks.

Delighted by the prospect of Miss Martineau's attendance, she went up to her after dinner, took the ear-trumpet in her hand and said that although it was possible that they might be mobbed again, she did not herself anticipate much trouble. Harriet was enchanted by "the clear silvery tones of her who was to be my friend for the rest of my life. I still see," she wrote twenty years later, "the exquisite beauty which took me by surprise that

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day—the slender form, the golden hair which might have covered her to her feet; the brilliant complexion, noble profile and deep blue eyes; the aspect, meant by nature to be soft and winning only, but that day (as ever since) so vivified by courage, and so strengthened by upright conviction as to appear the very embodiment of heroism. ‘My hopes,’ said she, as she threw up her golden hair under her bonnet, ‘are stronger than my fears.’”

Under the spell of Mrs. Chapman’s deep blue eyes and gymnastic performance with her golden hair, Harriet walked to the house where the meeting was to be held. Before they turned the last corner, her companion, Mr. Loring, warned her that she might need all her courage in another minute. She was relieved to see nothing more alarming than a dozen boys hooting at the coloured women who went into the house. When all the members were assembled, the front door was bolted and a way of escape over a fence at the back guarded for the ladies to use if they were mobbed. But Mrs. Chapman’s hopes were justified. They were not disturbed. Harriet and her companion, Miss Jeffery, were given seats in the drawing-room with the members of the Society, while Mr. Loring and the other men who had escorted them were allowed to listen to the proceedings from the hall. Harriet was interested, but her interest was changed to

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annoyance and dismay when Mr. Loring sent in a note asking her to say a few words of sympathy to the members. Since she was there merely as an observer she was both surprised and pained by the request, but she did not refuse. She told the abolitionists that she fully agreed with their principles, tacitly reserving her opinion about their methods. Her little speech was gratefully received, and she was touched to see that Mrs. Chapman "bowed down her glowing face on her folded arms." Mrs. Chapman had the best of reasons for feeling inexpressibly happy. The abolitionists had fairly won Miss Martineau. The bare fact that she had spoken her few sympathetic words to them placed her beyond the pale of good American society. The days of "Lafayetting" were over. She was forced to turn to the abolitionists for companionship, for she could hardly turn anywhere else, and the natural result was to blow her kindling enthusiasm for them and their cause into a steady flame. She had several interviews with Garrison, who, like Catherine Sedgwick, found her "plain and frank in her manners and not less so in her conversation." Her friendship with Mrs. Chapman grew by the heartiest mutual admiration, her delight in the society of the Follens was only increased by a long summer excursion in the country with them. When the time came for her to part from these dear com-

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panions she went with more than half an intention of going back before long to join them in their work. They too sorrowed and hoped. Dr. Follen, on being shown the empty berth which Harriet had occupied, was moved to exclaim: "How emptiness can fill the soul."

Back in England, as she sat writing her account of America and its institutions, Harriet's prose was touched to strange cadences as her memory swept her back into the presence of her Boston friends. "The world," she declared, at the end of her section on slavery, "has seen and heard enough of the reproach incurred by America, on account of her coloured population. It is now time to look on the fairer side. The crescent streak is brightening to the full, to wane no more. Already is the world beyond the sea beginning to think of America less as the land of the double-faced pretender to the name of Liberty than as the home of the single-hearted, clear-eyed Presence which, under the name of Abolitionism, is majestically passing through the land which is soon to be her throne."

VI

MEMORIES AND FICTION

THE American adventure was a good tonic for Harriet's mind and a not unprofitable investment for her pocket. She used her observations as material for two books, for which she was paid respectively £900 and £600. The first and more earnestly expository she intended to call *The Theory and Practice of Society in America*, a title appropriate to her study of the relation between the American Constitution and the actual social conditions prevailing among the citizens of the United States. But she yielded to the protests of her publishers, who thought the proposed title would discourage buyers, and whittled it down to *Society in America*. She prefaced the book by an Introduction intended to disarm possible criticism on the score of her sex, her fame or her deafness. Being a woman, she considered that she had enjoyed better opportunities of insight into American domestic life than any male traveller. Her fame was soon and easily forgotten in the pleasures of intercourse. Her deafness, although admitted to be a drawback in public

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places, was declared to be a positive advantage in private conversation. "I carry a trumpet of remarkable fidelity, an instrument, moreover, which seems to exert some winning power, by which I gain more in *tête-à-tête* than is given to people who have general conversation. Probably its charm consists in the new feeling which it imparts of ease and privacy in conversing with a deaf person." This unusual view of the uses of an ear-trumpet was pounced upon by one at least of her American critics as a reliably damning index to her character, and gave Sydney Smith an excuse for telling a friend who asked what Miss Martineau was doing, that "she is writing a book to prove that the only travellers who are fit to write books must be both blind and deaf." Throughout her life, Harriet never, apparently, recognised her deafness as any hindrance to her complete comprehension of surrounding phenomena. Yet she was not only restricted to hearing just what was specially intended for her to hear, but she aggravated this privation by her habit of laying down the trumpet before the person speaking into it had come to the end of the sentence, sometimes because she could guess what was coming, but sometimes because she decided that it would not be worth listening to, and occasionally because "it was apparently tending in an unwelcome direction." Thus, as one of the friends

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of her later life noted, the information or impression conveyed to her by a conversation was often altogether inaccurate or imperfect, but never on that account for one instant mistrusted.

In spite of this disqualification and in spite of the difficulties inherent in her plan of measuring Americans against the Declaration of Independence, the book she wrote was a valuable aid to the understanding of a nation perennially misunderstood by the English. It might have been more valuable if she had not suffered conversion in Boston, for, as Margaret Fuller complained, the black plague of slavery “haunts us on every page.” As a picture of America, her book was too obviously coloured by the creed of the abolitionists and it was no wonder that they reprinted portions of it as a pamphlet for wide distribution. Her energies and her talents were as freely at the disposal of Mrs. Chapman and Garrison as they had formerly been at the disposal of the Political Economists. When she was not writing she was busy furthering their interests by speech.

One of her first enterprises was a visit to Carlyle, who had great influence in America and might have been very useful to Mrs. Chapman. She went to see him in his new Chelsea home soon after her return and made herself extremely agreeable. “She is a notable literary woman of her day,” he

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wrote to his mother, “has been travelling in America these two years, and is now come home to write a book about it. She pleased us far beyond expectation: she is very intelligent-looking, really of pleasant countenance; was full of talk, tho’ unhappily deaf almost as a post, so that you have to speak to her through a trumpet. I think she must be some five-and-thirty. As she professes very ‘favourable sentiments’ towards this side of the street, I mean to cultivate the acquaintance a little and see whether it will lead to aught.”

This acquaintance, diligently cultivated on both sides, led to nothing in the way of help for the anti-slavery cause, but to an embarrassing amount of help for Carlyle. Once established on the footing of fortnightly visits to Cheyne Row, Harriet was impelled to set about improving the lot of her admired but so distressingly unpractical friends. It was largely her bustling energy that dragged Carlyle on to the platform as a lecturer. It was she who imported copies of the American edition of *Sartor Resartus* (not then published in England in book form) and sold them for him. He could think of nothing to do with the money thrust into his hand by the zealous and competent young woman except to spend it on a pair of signet rings, one for Harriet and one for his wife. This disposition to resist being placed under an obligation

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was taken into account next time there were proceeds of the sale to be handed over. Instead of gold, Harriet brought bottles of brandy, which the dyspeptic recipient was not so ungracious as to return. When there was a question of the publication of a volume of his contributions to *Fraser's Magazine*, she urged him to let her correct the proofs, but the idea of Harriet intervening between himself and his proof-sheets was more than Carlyle could bear. The Carlys were, by this time, less enthusiastic about Miss Martineau, who was too fond of instructing them, but her affection for them glowed as brightly as ever. She particularly admired Mrs. Carlyle and even noted in her diary what clothes she wore. "Mrs. Carlyle looked like a lady abbess; black velvet cap with lappets, white scarf and rosary. Very elegant creature." On another occasion, when she had been invited to dinner and arrived two hours in advance, she found her hostess "looking pretty, in a black velvet high dress and blonde collar." They talked, during those hours before dinner, about the domestic difficulties of a number of literary people, and Harriet observed that the relation between Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle offered a striking contrast to those sad tales. "The Carlys are true sensible people, who know what domestic life ought to be."

Harriet's domestic difficulties, though not matri-

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monial, were none the less troublesome. Mrs. Martineau, whose sight was beginning to fail, was no more reconciled than before to her daughter's independent position in London society, and it is at least possible that Harriet's patience was not improved by two years of American adulation. The little household was increased by the addition of her brother Henry, who, having lost the family funds and the young woman he had intended to marry, was consoling himself by drinking the stock of his new venture as a wine merchant. The old aunt who lived with them was older than ever and needed shelter from the discomfort created by the other inmates. Harriet, by her own account, maintained her pose as the good angel of the home incessantly, doing "my utmost to make the two old ladies under my charge happy," and suffering without complaint her mother's unreasonable refusal to permit her to employ a maid for herself or even to hire a workwoman to do her mending. She sat up late to do her own mending.

Some of her friends, who saw that she and her mother were bad company for each other, urged her to be away as much as she could, but Harriet, naturally enough, declined to be exiled from London. It was difficult to arrange to work easily and regularly in strange houses. It was impossible to rouse her distinguished acquaintances to interest

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themselves in the cause of the negro slave if she were not on the spot to talk to them. She was clearly needed, too, by people of importance, like Lord Durham and Charles Buller, his invaluable assistant, who wanted all the information Miss Martineau could provide about North America before they started out to take charge of Canada.

Neither domestic troubles nor social duties checked the pace of Harriet's output during the two years following her return. In addition to her two three-volume works about the United States, she wrote a book of counsel for earnest and inquiring travellers, called *How to Observe: Morals and Manners*, a production which incited Carlyle to suggest to Emerson that they might jointly promulgate a treatise *How to See*. "The old plan was to have a pair of *eyes* first of all, and then to open them: and endeavour with all your strength to *look*. The good Harriet!" Having taught travellers how to observe, she went on to teach domestic servants how to work, in a series of guides to service—*The Housemaid*, *The Lady's Maid*, *The Dressmaker* and *The Maid-of-all-Work*. These manuals combined the highest moral exhortations with the most precise directions for performing the labour appropriate to each situation, so precise, indeed, that a number of readers were persuaded

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that Miss Martineau must have been in service herself as a maid-of-all-work to acquire so thorough a knowledge of the duties, difficulties and consolations of those called to this unenviable station.

Various short articles for Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine* were thrown off by Harriet's rapid pen, as well as longer essays for the *Westminster Review*. This Radical organ was owned at that time by John Stuart Mill, who had engaged an enterprising young Scotchman, Robertson, to carry on the business of editing, under his general direction. For a time, Harriet was on excellent terms with Robertson, although she emphatically denied him the name of friend in her *Autobiography*, declaring his claim to that title to be one of the many delusions of his vanity. It is, at any rate, certain that she held earnest conversations with Robertson on the future of the Radical party, and that she begged his interest for the forthcoming work of her friend, Mr. Robert Browning, a clever and amiable young poet, just about to publish an historical poem entitled *Sordello*.

Browning, like Harriet, owed his career largely to the encouragement of W. J. Fox. The encouragement had begun for him early, for Fox had read and praised the Byronic "Incondita" produced by the poet at the age of twelve. The memory of this flattering recognition led the author

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of *Pauline* to send Fox a copy of the poem with a request for a little notice, a request which was rewarded by a long and favourable review in the *Monthly Repository*. Fox subsequently helped to find a publisher for *Paracelsus* and introduced Browning to several useful acquaintances, including his friend Macready, who read the young man's poem and noted in his diary that it was "a work of great daring, starred with poetry of thought, feeling and diction, but occasionally obscure." On an evening when Harriet was staying in his country house at Elstree, he handed her a copy. She read the first part immediately, to the destruction of her night's sleep. There could be no more propitious beginning for her acquaintance with the author, who had a perfectly normal appetite for appreciation. They met and for a time they got on together admirably. Browning was working on *Sordello*. He was finding the task more difficult than he had supposed, and one day he called to consult Harriet about his dilemma. Could he add an explanatory preface and notes? He thought he ought to deny himself that luxury. Wasn't he right? Didn't Miss Martineau agree that one couldn't combine the functions of poet and historian without splitting the interest? Certainly, Miss Martineau agreed very cheerfully. "I advised him to let the poem tell its own tale." She was less sure than usual

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that she had given the right advice when *Sordello* came out and she found herself incapable of discovering what the tale, as told, really was. She was annoyed too, or at any rate Browning thought she was annoyed, because he had not sent an advance copy to Robertson. The friendship, begun so auspiciously, cooled rapidly on Browning's side, if not on Harriet's. He grew to dread her pertinacious interest almost as much as Carlyle. When, a few years later, he was completing his arrangements for eloping with Elizabeth Barrett, he was disturbed to hear that Miss Martineau intended to visit London and hoped to see Miss Barrett, whose correspondence had been a pleasure and comfort to her in the sick-room. Browning was seriously alarmed. He wrote at once to warn Elizabeth to be very careful. She was expecting Mrs. Jameson too, and he begged her to remember that Miss Martineau, whom she had never seen, "is the more formidable friend. Mrs. Jameson will be contented with a little confidence, you see, and ask no questions—but I doubt if you can arrange matters so easily with the new-comer. Because no great delicacy can be kept alive with all that conceit—and such conceit!"

Of Fox, her early master and benefactor, Harriet saw nothing for some years after her return from America. During her absence he had taken the

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unconventional step of installing his beloved young friend, Eliza Flower, as mistress of the home he no longer shared with his wife. Eliza, no doubt, had many compensations for the rebuffs and avoidances of her friends and acquaintances, but it does not appear that she enjoyed the satisfaction of having Fox for a lover on any but the most exalted planes. That they were devotedly attached to each other was a fact which neither attempted to hide. Since, however, Eliza Flower was neither a servant nor a governess, the house was not visited by the less liberal-minded of Fox's circle, and Harriet, to Eliza's great distress, placed herself in this class. On the appearance of *Society in America*, she wrote, referring to Fox's favourable review: "Miss Martineau's book! You see what he thinks of that, it is indeed a masterly work, but what a strange and to me depressing anarchy is that want of unity in principle and conduct. When the fear of the world is not upon her how sound and wise are her views!" Two years later, when Harriet reopened her correspondence with Fox by writing to him for some necessary information, he added to his reply a remonstrance. "The language of your great work," he urged, "is that of the paramount worth of thorough sincerity, and the right of all to act on their own principles. And yet, towards myself, and that purest and noblest of beings with whom I

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am identified, and whom you recognise as such, your position is one of practical condemnation.” Harriet replied that although her affection for Fox was unchanged, she felt it to be her duty to mark her disapproval of his domestic arrangements by an absolute refusal of private intercourse. Other letters on the subject were exchanged, in one of which she accused Fox of having enviously changed his attitude to her “as soon as my success became great.” Nevertheless, the correspondence continued and after Eliza’s death they occasionally met.

Macready was, perhaps, one of the friends Harriet found most satisfactory. She enjoyed his “noble strain of meditative thought,” and she regarded his irritable temper (a fault she could generally forgive) amply compensated by “a chivalrous spirit of rare vigilance and an unsleeping domestic tenderness and social beneficence.” His ideals of reform for the stage were as lofty as hers for the reform of society, and they exchanged their views with a mutual admiration only occasionally qualified, on Macready’s side. He called to see her shortly after her return from America, to hear about the friends to whom he had given her letters. She told him about the friends and about the book she was going to write. “I was surprised and sorry to hear her say of Webster that his private character

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was bad. Alas ! alas ! She liked Clay the best of the American statesmen. She is a very zealous abolitionist, but, I think, has got some illusive notions on the actual state of opinion on that perplexing question. She talks more than she did —should I say *too much?* ”

Harriet might talk too much, but it was probably the easy, unconscious flow of her friendly conversation that kept her on good terms with the morbidly sensitive Macready, who passed a wretched evening at one of her parties because he did not know enough people, although he was introduced to “a Mrs. Gaskell and a Mrs. Reade—a very pretty Boston girl—and to Hallam. . . . I am quite a *stranger in society!* I fear I must be a disagreeable companion.” On a happier occasion, Chorley, another indefatigable diarist, found him in excellent vein at one of Miss Martineau’s soirées, discussing the womanly proprieties of “Pauline” in *The Lady of Lyons* with the ancient Miss Berrys, and of this party Macready noted that he had, indeed, passed an agreeable evening, but was much fatigued. At least one harmonious evening was spent in his house at Elstree, when the talk was broken only by his paternal obligation to hear the children say their prayers. He and Harriet found themselves in general accord, but there was just one subject “on which I do not cordially agree with this fine-

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minded woman, and on which I do not clearly understand her." This obscure subject was the question of female emancipation. "I do not clearly see what she would have in point of political power, nor for what." There could be nothing but prejudice or failure of attention to account for poor Macready's bewilderment about this prominent item of Harriet's programme for the improvement of society. There was no ambiguity about what she wanted either in her speech or her writings. She believed that women should enjoy the same political rights as men, and she would have liked to see them use those rights for supporting the policy of the Philosophic Radicals. Macready, although these views might be beyond his comprehension, did not think them dangerous. They made no difference to the purpose he and his wife entertained of christening a child in her honour.

One result of Macready's friendship was the frequent loan of a stage box for his performances, a privilege Harriet valued highly, for it enabled her to hear as well as to see. It was from that box that she was able to observe one evening, with rising indignation, the unbecoming behaviour of Queen Victoria during a performance of *King Lear*. Instead of watching Macready, the graceless young woman had her shoulder turned to the stage and was chatting to the Lord Chamberlain. This

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conduct lasted through three Acts, but the fourth Act attracted her attention and she laughed no more. She found the rest of the play interesting, but puzzling. She had not been aware until that evening, Harriet was told, that King Lear had any daughters.

Respect for the crown was not a characteristic of the age, but the Queen's early appearances had affected her subjects favourably. On the morning after William IV's death, Harriet's aunt and mother went to see the sovereign presented to her people at St. James's Palace. They were touched, like other elderly ladies, by the appeal of the little figure, in the simplest mourning, her brown hair dressed in plain sleek bands, standing beside Lord Melbourne with the tears running down her cheeks. Harriet missed this sight. She did not know about the custom and was out taking her daily exercise when a better-informed friend called to suggest an expedition to the Palace. But she had a seat in the Abbey for the Coronation, which she remembered as "the only occasion on which a lady could be alone in public without impropriety or inconvenience." She had reason to remember this, since her brother refused to believe that it would be safe for Harriet to walk from Fludyer Street to the Abbey without his escort, and made her wait half an hour while he had his breakfast, thereby causing

her to lose the chance of a front seat in the transept gallery. In spite of the delay she was at the Abbey by about five o'clock in the morning, dressed in "crape, blonde and pearls," and armed with a shawl, a book and a bag of sandwiches. Four hours' observation of the procession of ticket-holders filing into the Abbey "produced a strange effect of exhaustion and sleepiness," so from nine to half-past eleven Harriet withdrew into her book and stayed herself with sandwiches, returning to duty as a spectator when the Queen arrived. Although she declared afterwards that the effect of the service did nothing but strengthen her sense of the unreality of monarchy in England, she was immensely interested in the ceremony and clambered up on to the rail behind her seat to see the actual crowning. She approved the Queen's considerate behaviour to poor old Lord Rolle. And she was agreeably surprised by her looks. "The upper part of her face was really pretty and there was an ingenuous and serene air which seemed full of promise!" But at the end of a year the promise appeared to have failed. Harriet found the Queen's expression bold and discontented, a change which she ascribed to the transference from the salutary discipline of the Duchess of Kent's maternal rule to the lax tutelage of Lord Melbourne. She was relieved to see that all went well later, "after she was

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once fairly under the guidance of Sir Robert Peel, and happy in a virtuous home of her own."

At the end of the year 1837, Harriet recorded in her diary that she had finished her second book on America, *A Retrospect of Western Travel*. "I have not done it carelessly. I believe it is true; but it will find no place in my mind and life and I am glad it is done." She was glad because her head was full of a project for a new adventure. "Shall I despise myself hereafter," the diary goes on, "for my expectations from my novel?" Those expectations were sufficiently high. The thought of writing a novel had come to her rather as a temptation to conquer a new world than as an urgent desire to tell any particular story or study any particular character or situation. People were talking and writing a good deal about Scott and Jane Austen, and Harriet, after reading their novels with attention, saw no reason why she should not challenge these champions on their own ground. She was so much pleased with this scheme that she was hardly grateful for a proposal made to her to become the editor of a projected "economical magazine." She hesitated. She talked to her mother and her aunt. She consulted friends, who all advised her to accept. But she shrank from a position involving such dreadful risks of "failure and descent from my position" as well as an endless

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amount of hard work. She wrote to her brother James, and when he advised her to refuse she gratefully did so. After turning down the offer quite definitely, she went back to the prospective novel, continuing to read Miss Austen's works with diligent care. On the 9th of January, 1838, she "bound and mended two pair of shoes and darned a handkerchief. Finished *Judges* in the *Pictorial Bible*, which is a great treat to me. Finished *Pride and Prejudice*. It is wonderfully clever and Miss Austen seems much afraid of pathos. I long to try." Two days later she was so fortunate as to discover "two touches of pathos" in *Northanger Abbey* and she continued the search in *Emma*.

But something more than a determination to write a novel without avoiding pathos was required, and Harriet began to occupy herself with the business of finding a subject. An article in the *Quarterly* about Hayti convinced her that her novel must be about the negro leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture. "I have a strong persuasion," she wrote, "that this will prove my first great work of fiction. It admits of romance, it furnishes me with story, it will do a world of good to the slave question, it is heroic in its character, and it leaves me English domestic life for a change hereafter." She hurried, brimful of enthusiasm, to tell her constant confidante, Mrs. Ker, of the inspiration. But Mrs. Ker was

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not stirred to any corresponding eagerness, and her objections were so completely proof against her voluble friend's protestations that the scheme was abandoned for the time being. English domestic life was put first and the negro hero reserved for the change.

Harriet had already adopted the complete doctrine of the art of fiction according to Necessarianism which was afterwards set forth in the *Autobiography*. The best, indeed the only satisfactory plots must, she said, be lifted bodily from life. She had no belief in the achievements of what is called the creative faculty. Since none but the omniscient Deity, in whom she still had faith, could accurately predict what results would follow given causes, it was manifestly ridiculous as well as irreverent for mortal novelists to attempt this prophetic labour. Limited, purblind human intelligence could do no better than reproduce the inevitable design already traced by Providence. In support of her hypothesis, she instanced the excellent plots of Shakespeare and *The Bride of Lammermoor*, "Scott's one perfect plot." As lamentable examples of failure to profit by this simple aid to novel-writing she cited the works of Thackeray and Dickens.

But it was easier to find a plot than to use it. The life histories best known to a would-be novelist are those of friends or relations, and it was, as

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Harriet recognised, a delicate matter for a nineteenth-century Englishwoman to combine a decent respect for the privacy of others with a determination to exploit the domestic situation of an old family friend, said to be unsuitably married because he had been driven by the representations of a meddlesome matchmaker to propose to the sister of the woman he loved. The doctrine of necessity broke down when Harriet had to face the difficulty of portraying the protagonists in the drama. She chose to forget that the plots supplied by Providence can be worked out only by the actual performers to whom the rôles have been allotted, and she transplanted an American clergyman, who was quite at ease in his domestic relations, to play the part of the mismated husband. She learnt after the tale was published that even the scaffolding was fiction, as entirely fiction as any of the despised plots of Thackeray or Dickens. The family friend had not sacrificed inclination to conscience, and if his marriage was not happy he was at any rate suffering with the wife of his choice.

Deerbrook, the work begun with care for the propitious date on Harriet's thirty-sixth birthday, is a poor novel with good pages. A double love story, it suffers from the writer's inability to comprehend or portray the pains and compulsions of the passion of love. One of the many differences

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between herself and Jane Austen, whose manner she unconsciously adopted (3), was her ignorance of the limits of her powers. Where Jane Austen deliberately averted her eyes, Harriet Martineau could see nothing to be disregarded. She tossed her characters into the fires of temptation as recklessly as if mankind were all gold and asbestos. The relations between her men and women are the relations between romantic schoolgirls, based on nothing more vital or more dangerous than sentiment. It must, of course, be remembered in extenuation that a capacity for strong passion was a less conclusive mark of merit in 1838 than it is to-day, and that restraint figured not only in the theories of the economists but in the lives of men like Fox and Mill. The defect of *Deerbrook* is that passion is not so much controlled as absent, and love is equally at the mercy of moral ideals and idle lies. This lack of motive force destroys the effect of the major situations, but leaves the minor ones, vitalised from her own experience, to make their own very sincere appeal. The jealous affection of one sister for another, the self-denying love of a governess for her friend, are well depicted and developed, for Harriet had been a jealous sister and a loving friend, and in dealing with these relations she "found in this novel a relief to so many pent-up sufferings, feelings and convictions,

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that I can truly say it was uttered from the heart.” But the power and penetration displayed in analysing jealousy and affection cannot compensate for the general absurdity of the plot, which is needlessly enfeebled by Harriet’s disposition to invoke whatever unlikely acts of God might be wanted to create her situations. The penury required to bring into relief the noble qualities of her hero and heroine in adversity is brought about by catastrophes beyond the limit of any moderately critical reader’s belief, and the position is scarcely improved by the devastating plague lightly stirred in towards the conclusion for the sake of restoring the credit of a young surgeon and bringing a lying gossip to confession.

But *Deerbrook*, for all its weaknesses, found many admirers. John Sterling, who had dodged all encounters with the ear-trumpet in the Carlyles’ drawing-room, made an effort to meet the author of a book he thought very striking and both true and beautiful in parts. Mrs. Gaskell thanked Harriet for it as for a personal benefit. Macready recorded that on an August morning he “finished *Deerbrook* before I could rise. I close this book with feelings of gratitude and veneration to the author, for I have been much benefited by the confirmation of good aspiration and intention that has existed feebly within me.” His wife appears to

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have reacted rather differently, for Jane Carlyle wrote to her mother that when Mrs. Macready asked her how she liked Harriet's book, she answered, "How do *you* like it?" Whereupon Mrs. Macready "made wide eyes at me and drew her little mouth together into a button. We both burst out a-laughing." Carlyle wrote to his brother that "Miss Martineau has published a Novel, very ligneous, very trivial-didactic, in fact very absurd for the most part, and is well pleased with it." The Carlysles were feeling that they had perhaps had rather too much of Harriet's kind and unfailing schemes for their welfare. Jane, accustomed to producing her own conversational effects, found the strain of attending to the steady stream of well-informed but never sparkling talk a very exhausting occupation, and Carlyle complained that Harriet interrupted his work and left him with his hand "all thrown *out*!" "One wishes her heartily well," he added, "at a distance."

Harriet, who was soon to be far and permanently removed, had already sought temporary refuge in distance, not from the Carlysles, whose irritation was not perceptible to her, but from her home. The pose of dutiful daughter was increasingly irksome. She decided, after she had been home for two years, to go North for a change, even though it meant breaking off the composition of *Deerbrook* for a few

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weeks. The tour began with a meeting of the British Association at Newcastle. Harriet went for enlightenment, but found the meeting “spoilt by the obtrusions of coxcombs, the conceit of third-rate men with their specialities, the tiresome talk of one-idea'd men,” and the frivolous habits of the ladies, who were so abandoned as to spend their time surreptitiously sketching the scientists. She was herself an object of considerable interest, followed, wherever she walked, by “a tail of hundreds,” and sketched, presumably, nearly as much as the scientists.

An early letter of Dean Stanley's gives a faithful reflection of the effect produced by Harriet and Robertson, at the time of this meeting, on a young man of a widely different social and political world. Stanley, at that time a Fellow of University College and a slightly disconcerted spectator of his father's recent appointment as Bishop of Norwich, introduced himself to Miss Martineau on the boat which conveyed them both from Yarmouth to Newcastle. She hospitably invited him to stay with her brother-in-law and sister, Dr. and Mrs. Greenhow, at Newcastle. Stanley accepted, excusing himself to his correspondent for venturing into a hive of Nonconformity by “thinking that a Unitarian family with her in it was worth seeing, especially as a surgeon did not appear to present so offensive an appearance to the public as a minister—as her

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literary not her theological opinions form her chief characteristics—as my connection with her was not through the Bishop—and as, lastly, I shall have to subscribe the Athanasian Creed next summer.” At dinner, at Dr. Greenhow’s table, Stanley horrified his neighbour, Robertson, by innocently inquiring if he had seen the last number of the *Westminster Review*. Robertson informed him that he was talking to the editor. Stanley was delighted to have so good an opportunity of telling the editor that he wished the *Review* were more definitely Christian in its tone. Robertson, conveniently leaving out of account the opinions of his master, Mill, assured the young man that he was determined to make it a thoroughly Christian organ, since he personally was convinced that the only works necessary to moral and intellectual salvation were the *New Testament* and the *Novum Organum*. Stanley was gratified to hear this, as he was next day to observe that Miss Martineau was in the habit of carrying the *Pictorial Bible* about with her. He was pleased to discover, further, from a conversation he heard between Robertson and Harriet, that “zealous and destructive though they are in the reformation of earth, they will never allow it to go on to the reformation of heaven.” He admired Harriet, “a woman so entirely in a man’s position. . . . It is like a thaumatrope.”

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From Newcastle, Harriet went by way of the Lake District to Scotland, pledged to write up the topography of *Macbeth* for Knight's edition of Shakespeare. She enjoyed identifying what could be identified and she went to Iona to stand by Macbeth's grave. In October she went back to London and to *Deerbrook*, which was published the following spring.

VII

LIFE IN THE SICK-ROOM

DOMESTIC relations were not much improved by the Northern tour. Mrs. Martineau really needed more care and attention than Harriet was free to give and she still harped on the theme of a larger house and objected to some of Harriet's middle-class acquaintances. They had differences of opinion, too, about the *Pictorial Bible* and other things. The strain on Harriet's nerves was considerable, but the idea of living apart from her mother was hardly a possibility to be seriously entertained by a dutiful daughter of the period, and her only respectable resource was to fall ill. This relief came soon after *Deerbrook* was off her hands, while she was travelling in Italy. She was in Venice, tracking the footsteps of Shylock and Antonio for Knight's benefit, when a number of vague suspicions and pains terminated in a complete collapse diagnosed as the result of uterine displacement and tumour. She was brought back to England, and almost immediately removed from London to Newcastle, to be under the care of her brother-in-law, Dr. T. M. Greenhow, whose

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diagnosis agreed with that of the Venetian doctor. After several months in his house, without any improvement in her condition, she was taken to lodgings at Tynemouth, where she settled down with entire resignation to the life of a permanent invalid. From the first she maintained that she would never recover. Disease was worth much more to her than health at the price of her mother's company, and disease gave her, in addition, a heightened consideration which she might well have missed since her return from America. When Sir Charles Clarke, who saw her two years after the beginning of her illness, could only concur in Greenhow's treatment of palliatives and time, she immediately noted in her diary and announced to her friends that she had been certified as incurable (4). "It is strange," she wrote, "that this did not move me in the least, and does not now. I have long disbelieved that I should ever be in health again, and I have no wish that it were otherwise. How my mother will grieve!" Her relation to her mother is clearly illuminated by the nightmares which haunted Harriet at the beginning of her illness, when she could hardly sleep without assisting at her mother's fall, through her negligence, over a precipice or from a church steeple or over the banisters. Unsuspicious of the significance a later generation might attach to such dreams, she naturally re-

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corded them as conclusive and pathetic proofs of filial piety.

The affection of her friends was enhanced by their pity for her sufferings. Carlyle, while rejoicing that her “meagre didacticalities afflict me no more,” expressed regret that “her blithe, friendly presence cheers us no more.” He calculated, however, that “this silence, forced silence, will do her much good.” He imagined, no doubt, that Harriet was in a sick-room as soundless as he might have wished for himself. Nothing could be further from the reality. At Newcastle Harriet was chattering with perfect freedom. She was busy enlisting sympathy and collecting money for the founding of Oberlin College, an American institution to be open to all students, irrespective of colour or sex. She was inciting ministers to preach sermons in favour of abolition. She was discussing politics with Charles Buller. When she was established at Tynemouth, opportunity for conversation was less continuous, but her concern for the moral and physical welfare of Jane, the niece and slave of her landlady, must have found frequent tongue, and she poured herself out unsparingly to the relatives and friends who went to see her. Mrs. Carlyle, who paid her a visit in the autumn of 1841, apologised for being incapable of writing a letter from Tynemouth, “where Harriet Martineau exhausted in talk every particle

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of intellect, imagination and common-sense." A year later, Mrs. Jameson spent some days with the invalid, who was then considered to be in a worse state of health, needing constant opiates to relieve the pain and discomfort. Mrs. Jameson chronicled all the events of her visit at length in letters to her adored Lady Byron, from whom she had but just parted.

Suffering herself from a bad cold which made speech a painful effort, she was happy to find that Miss Martineau had health and spirits enough to take over all the talking. "I was with her yesterday," wrote Mrs. Jameson, "from 3 to 5, and then from 7 to 10, and to-day from 1 to 4; but this is not one of her *good* days, and after she had talked almost incessantly for 2 hours, with extreme vivacity, I thought it best to leave her for a time." During the two hours Harriet had given her friend the whole history of her malady, with every detail of the treatment she had undergone. It was clear, she said, that her case was hopeless, utterly hopeless, and she expected soon to know whether her life would be likely to end quickly or whether she must anticipate several more years of dragging disease. On the following day Mrs. Jameson spent three hours with her. Harriet seemed "so ill that I feared lest she should exhaust herself by talking, but the flow and liveliness of her discourse remained

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the same up to the last minute. We had much talk of Mrs. Austin and Catherine Sedgwick, or rather she talked and I listened.” During the days that followed, Harriet’s talk streamed over a great variety of subjects, including somnambulism and clairvoyance, in which she professed a belief not shared by her hearer, and the treatment of sex in fiction. On this subject, Mrs. Jameson, with all the experience of an unsuccessful marriage, read her a little lecture, assuring her that the passion of love was a much less manageable affair than she supposed and represented it. It was on this occasion that Harriet confessed that it was one she had never known herself.

At the conclusion of her visit, Mrs. Jameson analysed the relation between her hostess and herself at some length. She had an agreeable conviction that she had given Harriet pleasure by her company, but for her own part, in spite of her sympathy and admiration for the sufferer, she found herself overwhelmed by her “*too* conscious power,” and was ready to admit that she listened “more with my head than with my heart. . . . Whether things will thus remain, or admiration melt into some tenderer feeling, I do not know.” No tenderer ties were ever knitted between the two, rather the contrary, for all Harriet did for Mrs. Jameson in her *Autobiography* was to lump her with Mrs. Austin and

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others as "vain literary women . . . who make women blush and men smile and be insolent," a poor reward for so good and voiceless an audience.

Harriet's pen was no more idle during this period than her tongue. She had returned to her idea for a tale about the Haytian revolution, and towards the end of 1840 she published her glorification of the negro leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, under the title of *The Hour and the Man*, a name designed to conceal the subject from readers who might be supposed to start with an anti-negro bias. Her friends read the book with interest, heightened by their admiration for the writer's persistent courage and reverence for its lofty moral tone. Carlyle found it inspired by beautiful enthusiasm and both envied and pitied Harriet's faith in the beauties of virtue and "Socinian formulas." Florence Nightingale, brought into contact with the invalid about this time, thought it the greatest of historical romances. Miss Edgeworth, unaware of Harriet's criticisms of her own works, sent her an assurance of fervent admiration. Jeffrey was charmed. "The book," he wrote to his successor, Empson, "is calculated to make its readers better, and does great honour to the heart as well as to the talent of the author. I would go a long way to kiss the hem of her garment, or the hand that delineated this glowing and lofty representation of purity and

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noble virtue." He went on to urge that Miss Martineau should not only be rescued from all debasing anxieties about her subsistence, "but placed in a station of affluence and honour; though I believe she truly cares for none of these things. It is sad to think that she suffers so much and may even be verging to dissolution." Jeffrey's idea was that the station of affluence and honour was to be secured by a Civil List pension. There had been talk about a pension for Miss Martineau earlier, a reward for the public benefit of her *Illustrations of the Principles of Political Economy*, but the fruition of the scheme had been delayed, and during the delay the pension had been declined in advance by Harriet. This revival of the project was the occasion of a more reverberating refusal. In a long letter to Charles Buller, who had written to her on Lord Melbourne's behalf, she declined the pension on the ground that while taxation was so unjustly and "afflictively" levied, she could not accept anything bestowed by the Government without the direct sanction of the taxed. "I seriously and truly feel," she wrote, "that I had rather if need were . . . receive aid from the parish, and in the workhouse, where I could clearly read my claim, than in the very agreeable manner proposed."

This letter was published in *The Times* and other papers. It created a mild sensation. Writers who

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were enjoying, or hoped to enjoy, Civil List pensions were excusably cross. Harriet Martineau was felt to be a public nuisance, capable of more mischief from her sick-room at Tynemouth than from her house in Fludyer Street. Mrs. Austin referred to Harriet's gesture when her turn came, a few years later, to be offered a pension, remarking that if she had been disposed "*to faire effet*" she would have rejected it with disdain, like Miss Martineau. Miss Elizabeth Rigby, another born member of the Norwich intelligentsia, with a long-standing prejudice against the Martineaus, was only reflecting opinions she heard expressed in several quarters when she declared that "when people decline honours on the plea of the mob not having been consulted about them, they constitute that very enlightened and dependable body their rulers. A poor man might as well refuse assistance from the trustees of a charity until the original subscribers had all been consulted. It seems, however, that Miss Martineau's confidence in the mob has not been misplaced, for their subscription will probably be larger than what the Government proposed in their name."

The subscription referred to was the Testimonial Fund which some of Harriet's friends were raising for her benefit. Against this gift she did not protest. She tried, indeed, to know as little about

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it as she could, but this effort was frustrated by “ an officious person ” who insisted on telling her everything she knew. Harriet, bent on preserving all that could be saved of her ignorance, instructed her aunts, who were in lodgings near hers, to make a point of coming in whenever they saw that particular visitor entering the house and to testify to her resolute determination to hear nothing whatever about the scheme. The sum collected amounted to over £1,400, most of which was invested in an annuity. There would have been no question of any other use for any portion if Harriet had not startled the subscribers by putting in a request that they should buy some plate. Mrs. Carlyle sent her husband a lively account of the embarrassment of the two treasurers, Erasmus Darwin and Hensleigh Wedgwood, faced by Harriet’s desire for a silver teapot. Darwin had called to tell her about it and to enjoy a little of her sparkling sympathy. He said they had had a letter from Miss Martineau asking for £100 worth of plate. She had sent Darwin a jeweller’s list, with various articles, including a silver teapot at £45, marked for his guidance. “ Darwin ‘ thought at first she must have gone mad,’ then he fancied she wished, in spending the rest of the money, to preserve this much of it in the shape of a *testimonial* ! then that she wished to leave it in a legacy to her brother James ! Anyhow, after some

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days' deliberation, Mr. Wedgwood and he, who were required to do this thing in their *official capacity*, peremptorily declined it: if Miss Martineau chose to buy £100 of plate, she must do it herself after she entered into possession of the money; as they had expressly stated, the *money*, not *plate*, was to be given to her. Certainly Harriet is going all to nonsense with her vanities. Now she will probably be quite angry with these men, who have done so much for her, because they refuse to comply with her whim." But it was a harmless whim, and one is glad to know that Harriet bought her plate and invited the Ladies Lambton to a "testimonial *fête*" at Tynemouth, where the teapot was used for the first time.

Following *The Hour and the Man*, Harriet amused herself by writing some tales for children because she felt too ill to undertake anything serious. These tales, published under the collective title of *The Playfellow*, are better known to-day than any of her other works. To the younger generation, Harriet Martineau is little more than a name, but quite a number of middle-aged persons of the reading classes, if they were asked to say what they associated with the name, would be likely to answer that she was a writer of children's stories who lived in the Lake District. They may recall with real pleasure their own enjoyment of *Feats on the Fjord*

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or *The Crofton Boys*, which are good stories, simply written and vividly imagined. When they were published Harriet made up her mind that her life and career were at an end. She waited for some fatal development of her condition with no other literary anxiety than a wish to write her autobiography. This desire, which appeared to her, like others, clothed in all the majesty of a moral obligation, was not new. In 1831, before she had any claim to fame, she wrote to Fox that she was making progress with an autobiography, and this beginning she had preserved. She read it to Mrs. Jameson one evening during her visit. But as she lay, considering the duty of putting her notes into final order and completing them, she began to speculate about the biographical studies which other people might write after her death. She felt herself to be an obvious mark for biographers; wherever she turned her eyes they seemed to surround her. It was soon revealed to her that if there was one thing more important than the task of writing her own life it was the obligation of ensuring that it should be difficult for others to write it. A mass of raw material existed in the shape of her letters to her family and her friends, for Harriet was known, even in a letter-writing age, as a fluent correspondent. She was uneasy about those letters. She imagined them tied up in dated packets,

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treasured by the recipients against the time when they might be needed for the biography. She wished they could be destroyed. Desire was characteristically and immediately translated into moral principle. She wrote to all her correspondents to tell them that in the interest of the general sacredness of private correspondence she begged that they would be so good as to burn every letter they had received from her, and every letter they might receive in future. She added that if they did not comply with the request they could never hope to hear from her again.

Her correspondents were submissive, angry or amused, according to their natures. Mrs. Jameson wrote to remonstrate. If she were not to be allowed to use her judgment with regard to the letters written to her by her friends, then she was not considered fit to be Harriet's or any lady's friend. She admitted that Harriet had a right to make requests about her own letters, but she protested with fervour against the general principle brought forward in support of the request. Mrs. Carlyle gave herself a headache by writing two long letters of expostulation. "Poor Harriet," she said, "seems to me to be got into a dreadful state of 'self-consciousness' of late—to be fancying the world has nothing more important to do than to occupy itself with her, and her '*principles of action*'! That

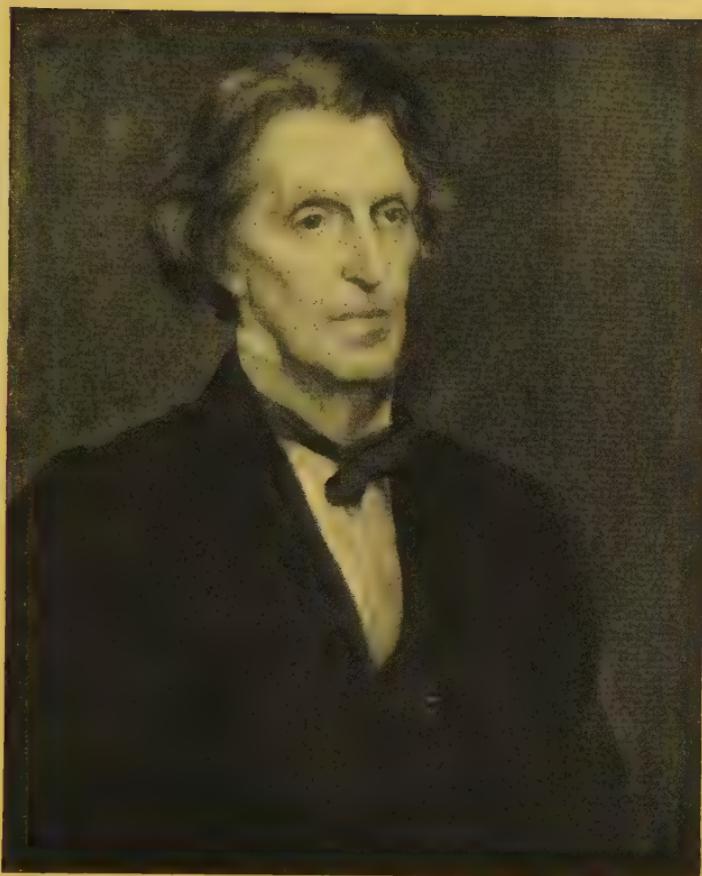
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affair of the *pension* having subsided—and full time it should!—she has got up a new *excitement* for herself. . . . She is demanding throughout the whole circle of her correspondence, which is almost as wide as the world, that there should be a thorough conflagration of her letters—in fear of their publication after her death—and this she calls—not what it really is, a diseased anxiety about her future *biography*, but ‘*her protest against the laxity of society in the matter of letters.*’ ‘She feels it her *duty* (varnish!) to set this example,’ etc., etc. I felt it *my* duty (without varnish!) to tell her that I considered the whole uproar ‘*unworthy* of her’—to tell her a great many very sensible things, which have been entirely thrown away—‘she perceives that I think her a little mad—morally,’ but the only inference she has drawn from that is that I must be a little mad—morally—and so she goes on exciting this letter-conflagration as if it were ‘*the burning up of all the sins of the world.*’”

Mrs. Carlyle, having made her protest, put a match to her own bonfire, but a few of Harriet’s correspondents refused. One, in particular, refused, one who had in his hands a very complete record of her changing opinions and impulsive actions, her brother James. When the mandate was issued, James Martineau took out the packets of letters he had had from Harriet and began to read

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them again. He found that the tone of his sister's letters to him had changed for the worse. The more recent ones were less precious than those she had written earlier, when he was himself her main source of inspiration and haven of sympathy. The later letters were short, summary and dictatorial. If she did not agree with James, she contradicted him with "a sharp impatience which gave notice that any exchange of ideas was useless, and that the condition of happy intercourse must be the suppression of all serious dissent from her judgments." In short, James preferred to forfeit the future rather than the past. And where principles were concerned, he was quite as well able as Harriet to take his stand on the highest peaks. Letters were treasures given in trust and not consistently to be withdrawn in distrust. He made his choice "with sadness, but with decision," a decision which vexed his sister very much. Since so many confidential letters remained in existence, she must contrive some other means of safeguarding the biography. She took legal advice and had a clause inserted in her Will to prohibit the publication of her letters after her death, a prohibition which operated with perfect success when James Martineau found himself, in 1885, unable to support his public denial of Mrs. Fenwick Miller's statements by quoting the evidence in his possession.



JAMES MARTINEAU

From the portrait by G. F. Watts in the National
Portrait Gallery

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Having thus cleared the ground for her auto-biography, Harriet was content to reserve the actual writing of it till she should again feel death to be imminent. She was rather better in the autumn of 1843, several people observed that she moved about with greater ease, and some of her symptoms were relieved by iodine. On September 15th, in the fifth year of her illness, she noted that “a new and imperative idea occurred to me—Essays from a Sick-room.” She would have begun them the moment the idea arrived, but she was obliged to exercise restraint for four days while some of her family stayed out a visit of consolation. She did not want to tell them about her plan, she did not want to tell anyone. As soon as she was alone again, she scribbled off the first essay. Her pen ran through that and the other essays faster than it had ever run before. In October she was interrupted by more cheering visitors, but the book was finished and offered to Moxon early in November. It came out in December, the writer’s identity being draped but not disguised by the pseudonym “An Invalid.” The only persons deceived about the authorship were Harriet’s most intimate friends, who found it impossible to believe that she could have kept the composition a secret from them. Less intimate and more intelligent readers found Miss Martineau’s views written large and serious over every page.

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Her demand for the destruction of her letters was expounded and justified anew. Her treatment of Sympathy, Life, Death, the Perils and Pains of Invalidism and kindred subjects was thoroughly characteristic. Twelve years later, Harriet found herself shocked by "the religious remains" in the Essays, where resignation to the will of God and earnest belief in a future life are the acknowledged foundations of the uplifting sentiments which gave the book its popularity. Sympathetic, yet tonic, it was felt to be admirably adapted for presentation to invalids and their families. Numbers of readers found nourishment in Harriet's confidences, including Wordsworth, who confessed to being "charmed, affected and instructed by the invalid's volume." The reader least charmed was Mrs. Martineau, who was grieved to see the sufferer unburdening herself to the world instead of to her mother.

She was soon called to face a grief more bitter than the publication of the Sick-room Essays. Her affection for the invalid and her desire for her restoration to health were tested altogether beyond their limits by Harriet's next adventure and its resounding consequences.

For some little time, several of her friends had urged her to try the effect of mesmeric treatment. Mesmerism and phrenology, linked together as allied "sciences," were at that time popular subjects

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for drawing-room exposition and experiment. Conscientious men like Hallam bore serious testimony to the marvels they had witnessed at séances. Harriet's youngest sister wrote that her own husband, an orthodox medical practitioner, had been greatly impressed by the efficacy of mesmerism in producing insensibility to pain. Mr. and Mrs. Basil Montagu wrote to entreat her to try the experiment. They had both been converted, they said, by seeing the wonderful effect of the treatment of "Ann Vials" by their "dear young friend, Henry Atkinson." Bulwer Lytton urged her to employ a somnambule.

To these suggestions Harriet replied that she was ready to try mesmerism or a somnambule or anything else of the kind, but there were two objections. She was too ill to travel away from Tynemouth, and if a mesmerist were to visit her there, certain members of her family, notably her mother, would be horrified beyond measure. But the objections naturally vanished when the visit of a mesmeriser was proposed by the most proper person conceivable, her brother-in-law, Greenhow, the surgeon in charge of her case. He had had the curiosity to attend a lecture by Spencer Hall, a popular and earnest itinerant exponent of the theory and practice of mesmerism. Greenhow, who, as a prominent Newcastle citizen, had been invited to

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take the chair at the meeting, had been puzzled and impressed by the success of Hall's performance. The lecturer struck him as honest, and he began to wonder whether a little mesmeric treatment might not relieve his unfortunate sister-in-law of some of her pain and minimise the need for opiates. Harriet very willingly agreed to the trial, and on the 22nd of June, 1844, Spencer Hall treated her for the first time (5). As soon as he began to make passes from the forehead to the back of the head, Harriet saw all the solid objects in the room dissolve to ghostly shadows surrounded by phosphorescent light. She felt rather hot and sick afterwards, but this discomfort was succeeded by a delightful sensation of lightness and relief. Hall was tired the next day, and on the third day he was too unwell to come at all. Harriet, who had been counting on his passes to take the place of her afternoon opiate, suggested to her maid that she should imitate the movements she had seen Hall make. The effect was excellent. Within a minute the solid objects changed to illuminated outlines and a cool comfort spread over the patient's body. Hall, seeing the good result of the maid's ministrations, advised her to continue, and this treatment went on for two months, Harriet directing the motions herself from a manual of practical instruction. She left off opiates and began to consider the possibility

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of being not only relieved but altogether healed by mesmerism. The Basil Montagus consulted their friend, Mr. Atkinson, himself a mesmeric healer. It appeared that he knew just the right person to undertake the more advanced treatment needed at the stage Miss Martineau had reached, a young widow, Mrs. Montague Wynard. It was soon arranged that she should stay with Harriet at Tynemouth, and under her treatment, aided by Mr. Atkinson's written advice, Harriet made such rapid progress that she felt quite well by November.

The news of her recovery excited the entire circle of her acquaintance and admirers and a number of other persons as well. Many people had supposed, like Elizabeth Barrett, that she was dying of cancer, the disease always freely assigned to any sick person not visibly consumptive. They were expecting to mourn her death when they heard instead that she had been trudging several miles through the snow. Very soon they heard a great deal more, for Harriet, completely converted to mesmerism, experienced the usual imperative desire to announce her convictions to the world. She published five articles in the *Athenæum* (6), beginning with an account of her own sensations under the treatment and passing on to a detailed description of the clairvoyant perceptions of her landlady's niece, Jane. It appeared that Jane, a simple-minded

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child in everyday life, blossomed into an educated and intelligent young person under the influence of Mrs. Wynard's passes. As conclusive evidence of her clairvoyant powers when in the mesmeric trance, Harriet offered an account of Jane's vision of the escape of the crew of a vessel wrecked near Hull. The girl had a cousin in the crew, the son of another aunt who lived in a cottage near the house where Harriet had rooms, and both households had suffered from natural anxiety when the wreck was reported. It was unfortunate for Harriet's case that inquiry brought to light the fact that Jane's aunt, the mother of the young sailor, had been over to Shields to see if there was any news of the wreck on the day of the trance communication, and had brought back the welcome intelligence that the crew was rescued and communicated it to her sister and to Mrs. Wynard's maid some hours before the séance was held. Dilke, the editor of the *Athenæum*, took the opportunity to publish *A Few Words by Way of Comment on Miss Martineau's Statement* after her series of articles was complete. His passion for destructive analysis found peculiar satisfaction in the tale of the wreck, and it was certainly unlucky for Harriet that she should have staked her faith on it being "impossible to discover any chink through which deception or mistake could have crept in," when, as Dilke gleefully pointed out, there was a chink large enough for a *porte-cochère*. Readers of

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the *Athenæum*, which had enjoyed an unusually large sale during the publication of the articles, were to be heard arguing the case with vehemence on one side or the other. Elizabeth Barrett, who had come to know Harriet through correspondence during her illness, was one of her stoutest defenders (7). She assured her friends that every statement made by Miss Martineau was credible, although she regretted her indiscreet and precipitate method of advocating mesmerism. She begged Robert to believe in her, but Robert was firm. He knew Miss Martineau and he agreed with Dilke that she was an incompetent witness. Controversy about the "apocalyptic housemaid" raged more and more furiously. Dilke published sworn statements of witnesses to show how easy it was for Jane to know all about the safety of the crew by perfectly normal means before Mrs. Wynard mesmerised her. Harriet sent a solicitor to obtain opposing statements from Jane's aunts. Dilke discovered that the essential fact of the safety of the crew had been known not only three hours before the séance, but actually the day before, when Jane's cousin had been to Shields to ask about her brother's boat.

Jane's doubtful veracity and the disputed value of her trances as evidence obscured for a time the less contestable fact of Harriet's recovered health. But that too was a frequent subject of speculation. Mrs. Carlyle professed to be shocked rather than

surprised. People had no business to be cured, she held, by any means except severely purgative pills and draughts. And here was Harriet Martineau expecting “that the whole system of Medicine is going to be flung to the dogs presently; and that henceforth, instead of Physicians we are to have Magnetisers! May be so; but ‘I as one solitary individual’ (my Husband’s favourite phrase) will in that case prefer my sickness to the cure. One knows that sickness, at all events, comes from God; and is not at all sure that *such* cure does not come from the Devil.” Elizabeth Rigby, after hearing a mesmerist of Harriet’s acquaintance lecture at an evening party, wrote an entry in her diary condemning the whole “odious, disgusting and impious business, worthily advocated by women without principle and lectured upon by men who drop their *h*’s.” This was curious criticism of a woman whose principles stuck out of her in every direction, but Miss Rigby had never supposed that any good could come out of the Martineau household. In the midst of the general debate about Harriet’s recovery, a monstrous faggot was added to the fuel by Greenhow, who took the opportunity to publish a *Medical Report of the Case of Miss H. M.*, at a shilling (8). His statement that he had the approval of his patient for the publication was vigorously denied by Harriet, who declared that he

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had spoken of nothing more than a report for a medical journal. Whatever preliminary permission she may have given, she could never have supposed that her medical attendant would take advantage of his position to publish a pamphlet which, although ostensibly addressed to the medical profession, contained a full description of her symptoms in terms intelligible to any lay reader. Greenhow, who was just as much annoyed with Harriet for having abandoned drugs for mesmerism as if he had not himself introduced the mesmerist, was concerned to make two statements. First, that in any case she would probably have recovered her health in the course of time, and secondly, that there was no great change in the condition of the organ affected although the accompanying pain appeared to be greatly relieved. "How far the relief from the sympathetic nervous distress attendant on this case is to be attributed to the direct agency of mesmerism —whether it has acted by a power *sui generis*, or by supplying a powerful and well-timed stimulant to the mind . . . is a question which everyone must be left to answer for himself."

For Harriet the answer was clear. She was certain that she had been completely and finally cured by the direct power of mesmerism, which gave her ten years of sound health.

VIII

THE PRINCE OF ENGLISH
MESMERISERS

IF Harriet fell ill to escape her mother's company, she protected herself even better by her choice of a remedy. Mrs. Martineau, who had frequently been to comfort her daughter in her sickness, refused to see her after her restoration to health. Her creed might not allow her to join Mrs. Carlyle in ascribing the cure to the devil, but she could at least be sure it was offensive to God. Drugs and knives were legitimate weapons against disease, but these wavings of hands in the air were contrary alike to divine wisdom and to common-sense.

Several members of the family agreed, but Harriet's younger sister, Ellen, and her elder brother, Robert, stood by her. Robert, a prosperous manufacturer living at Birmingham, not only invited her to stay in his house, but positively encouraged her to talk about her mesmeric experiences. She took full advantage of the opportunity, for her tongue was at all times a faithful reporter of her mental preoccupations. She chattered away, happy in the knowledge that she was being publicly

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discussed and not yet infuriated by Greenhow's free exposure of the details of her physical symptoms. "My case has made a great sensation," she wrote to Mrs. Chapman, "and the sick and doctors write to me—a multitude of them." The business of answering the multitudinous letters kept her occupied and cheerful. She began to think of plans for fresh work and a new home. She supposed that she would eventually go back to London, but she arranged to spend the summer at Ambleside, where she could enjoy the beauties of nature and the company of friends as much interested in mesmerism as she was herself.

On her way North she stopped to visit cousins at Lenton, near Nottingham, where she fell under the spell of a new magnetism. It had been arranged by her hostess that Mr. Henry George Atkinson, who had already prescribed passes for Harriet by correspondence, should spend a few days in the house with the notoriously successful "case." She was naturally glad to have the opportunity of meeting him, and as the hour of his arrival drew near, she strolled down the lane with her hostess in the direction from which he was expected. He came into sight punctually, accompanied by the gardener, who carried his bag. Mr. Atkinson was talking to the man with evident amiability. He looked older, Harriet thought, than the age she

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knew him to be, about thirty. She and her hostess agreed when they compared their impressions that "his perfect gentlemanliness is his most striking and uncontested attribute." Other attributes were his handsome features, his scientific culture, his mesmeric gifts, and a certain reserve which made them feel it "difficult to know him." The reserve appeared, however, to be more a matter of manner than of subject. He startled Harriet, as they walked in the garden on that first evening, by questioning the necessity or significance of personal immortality. She was disturbed to find that he held such atheistical views and she talked to her hostess about them later, "with grave interest and uneasy concern." The good lady was incredulous. Harriet could not have heard what Mr. Atkinson said. When she had to admit that Harriet had heard more than could be accounted for by misunderstanding, she was too much upset to discuss the subject any further. But Harriet discussed it further with Mr. Atkinson, for although "still in the atmosphere of selfishness which is the life of Christian doctrine and of every theological scheme," she was struck by "the nobleness of his larger view." After a few more conversations she was ready to emerge from the stifling air of Christian theology into the purer gas provided by the new prophet. She easily transferred her adoration from an invisible God

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to the more satisfying image of perfect gentlemanliness provided by her young friend. Throughout her later life Atkinson's bust decorated her study and inspired her labours. One day, several years after that first encounter, she asked James Payn, then a new acquaintance, whether the portrait she showed him did not remind him strongly of a well-known character. Payn, who had not seen the living original, looked carefully at the face. He thought the countenance striking, "full of restrained enthusiasm," but he could think of no one like it.

"Look again," said Harriet, "you surely must see the resemblance."

Payn looked again and hazarded "Robespierre."

It was an unexpected reply, for Harriet, with her memories of the *Pictorial Bible* uneffaced, had noticed a remarkable likeness between Mr. Atkinson and Jesus Christ.

She was not his only admirer. Margaret Fuller, who met him at Ambleside a year after Harriet's recovery, wrote home to Boston about "the prince of English mesmerisers." He had "a head for Leonardo to paint," and she found his manners "mild and composed, but powerful and sagacious." His detachment from material preoccupations and a certain mystery about his movements added to the Gioconda-like fascination. "He seems bound by

no tie," she wrote, " yet looks as if he had relatives in every place." Whatever may be the look appropriately worn by a man who has relatives in every place, there is nothing in Harriet's *Autobiography* to suggest that she ever saw it inspired by the sisters or brother he possessed. It was to his dead father's industry and ability that Atkinson owed his own freedom from the vulgar tie of a money-making profession or trade (9). The elder Atkinson, who began life as a carpenter, ended it as an architect of some reputation. He was particularly successful in modifying and adapting existing buildings and in designing edifices in the Gothic taste of his day. He compounded a reliable cement and he was able to leave his family adequately endowed. He found time, in his busy life, for indulging a strong natural taste for science, and was known as "a most excellent chemist, geologist and botanist." Henry George, his second son, who did not take kindly to the profession of architect, inherited or imbibed some of his father's love of natural science, but he was more interested in the behaviour of man than in the behaviour of animals or elements. He grew up at a time when the phrenological teaching of Gall and Spurzheim was supposed by a considerable number of people to provide the key to a real understanding of human nature. He inherited casts of the skulls of idiots

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from his father, who had not excluded phrenology from his sphere of interest. And he conducted for himself a series of mesmeric experiments which confirmed and extended the doctrine of Gall. He was an earnest young man with a strong sense of his responsibility to the scientific world. His manner was impressive. One of his friends, Dr. Samuel Brown, the exponent of the atomic theory, assured Harriet that "if his attainments in positive knowledge and his culture in the art of expression were equal to the nobleness and magnitude of his proper genius, he would be the foremost man of the age." That he was so far from being the foremost man of the age as to have left no name for anything beyond his connection with Harriet Martineau, was due no doubt to the regrettable deficiencies delicately indicated by Brown. His scientific interests were keen and genuine, but they strayed aimlessly about, undirected by any adequately trained or educated intelligence. He had, however, read the works of Bacon, which contained for him the final wisdom of all the ages, and he was prepared to apply the Baconian method to all the problems which came under his observation. Bacon, sweeping aside the metaphysical reasoning of his predecessors, had declared that nature itself, properly interrogated, would yield the answer to every question asked of it. Atkinson was ready and willing to spend his days

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interrogating nature in what he thought to be the proper manner.

At the outset of their acquaintance, Harriet was sometimes disconcerted by his serene disregard of the philosophers she cited. She ascribed his indifference to ignorance. Later, as she came to know him better, she realised that the ignorance was cultivated, which made it entirely creditable. She listened with increasing humility while he expounded the marvels of science, of which she had known almost nothing, and the philosophy of Bacon. She was grateful for his patience with her “waywardness and occasional sauciness.” Patience was, indeed, one of Atkinson’s most noticeable virtues. There was nothing fiery in his nature. When Harriet described him to Charlotte Brontë, she emphasised his “placidity and mildness.” He was, she said, “a combination of the antique Greek sage with the European modern man of science.” Charlotte was not attracted. She found herself suspecting that “torpid veins and a cold, slow-beating heart lay under his marble exterior.” While allowing for the Brontë weakness for passionate heroes, it is difficult not to share Charlotte’s suspicion. The interminable letters that Atkinson wrote to Harriet for the rest of her life suggest a complacent attitude rather than a living man behind the too-ready pen. Throughout their

friendship, which was for a time notorious without ever attracting a breath of scandal, it was she who supplied the flame for Atkinson's slow-combustion fuel. She glowed all the time. She listened to everything he had to say, accepting his exposition of phrenology as unquestioningly as she had once accepted the axioms of Malthus and Ricardo. Most willing to offer him a public testimony to her faith in his "science," she followed with modifications the example set by her spiritual father, Bentham, in leaving him her skull as a legacy, with the brain included, provided the testator were not too far away to undertake a reasonably prompt dissection. The local doctor was instructed to prepare the legacy. When he died, his successor was summoned to have the matter explained to him. He "listened anxiously, made himself master of the situation, and distinctly engaged to do what we asked." But at this point Atkinson begged to be relieved of the threatened responsibility, and a codicil was added to the will, revoking the legacy but reaffirming the testator's interest in the science she had intended to benefit.

Mesmerism was a branch of experimental science which Harriet practised both as operator and subject. Soon after she was established at Waterhead, after her visit to her cousins at Lenton, her landlady, encouraged by the lodger's evident

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respectability, asked her whether she thought some sick neighbours would benefit from the treatment. Harriet invited the sick neighbours in and tried her own hands at the passes. She found that she had some influence and thought her patients were usually better for it. Sometimes she had as many as six or seven at a time lying entranced about her sitting-room. She assisted at séances where Atkinson and others investigated the behaviour of the faculties under mesmerism. It was the object of the “phreno-mesmerists” to show that the stimulation of the various organs of the brain provoked appropriate responses. “Everybody is talking of Miss Martineau’s ‘somnambule,’” wrote Miss Mitford. “The last intelligence is that Lord Morpeth was on his knees the other evening, talking Greek and Latin and three modern languages to the poor girl. . . . When Imitation was touched, she translated what was said; when Language, she replied to it. . . . Charlotte Elizabeth has addressed a letter to Miss Martineau in which she ascribes the agency to Satan.”

Unconvinced by Charlotte Elizabeth’s letter, Miss Martineau pursued her researches. She listened to a clairvoyant account of Mr. Atkinson’s appearance in his London house. She was clairvoyantly watched and reported on herself. She was mesmerised by two persons at once and broke into

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rhythmic utterance. A shorthand writer was employed to take down her speeches. They were not published, but it is easy to believe Harriet's assurance that they were unlike anything she ever said under other circumstances. She wrote to tell Fox of the lofty and sublime nature of these utterances, which were, it seemed, too sacred to be communicated in detail even to him. In Atkinson, however, she had a cool-headed commentator. He was a hardened witness of the antics of the mesmerised and he warned her to be careful about concluding that the voice of her trance was the voice of eternal truth. She was disappointed, but tractable. According to her own account, when Margaret Fuller came the following year to rejoice in the spiritual enlightenment and exaltation she expected to find radiating from her friend, she discovered instead a thoroughly commonplace person who might just as well, she said, never have been mesmerised at all. This is hardly borne out by the note in Margaret Fuller's journal of "the look of health in her face, but a harried, excited, over-stimulated state of mind."

By the time Margaret Fuller paid her visit, Harriet Martineau was a confirmed Lake dweller. Before her summer at Waterhead was over, it was quite clear that she was not needed to act as companion to her mother any more. Mrs. Martineau

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had acquired another companion, unpolluted by mesmeric passes. She lived at Liverpool, within daily reach of at least one son and daughter who shared her own view of Harriet's traffic with animal magnetisers. The unforgiven and unrepentent Harriet began to consider the possibility of living not only without her family but without most of her acquaintance. She was charmed by the beauty of Ambleside and decided that she could lead an innocent and happy life there, the necessary ingredients of such a life being "a house of my own among poor improvable neighbours, with young servants whom I might train and attach to myself; with pure air, a garden, leisure, solitude at command, and freedom to work in peace and quietness." Since the district provided neighbours sufficiently poor and presumably improvable, in addition to the other essentials, she bought two acres of ground and planned for herself the little grey house which was her home for the rest of her life. She amused herself with the arrangement of the details. She enjoyed watching the builders at work. The house had a drawing-room, a study-dining-room and a kitchen below, four bedrooms above—her own, two for the servants and one for a guest. She filled the drawing-room with the gifts of her friends and relations. There was a *prie-Dieu* worked in Berlin wool by her nieces, a gold inkstand from Lord

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Durham, a silver almanac from Erasmus Darwin, a *papeterie* from Florence Nightingale, statuettes of Aristides and Niobe from her sister and her aunt, a grand medley of engravings, pastels, oil-paintings and water-colours, by different hands and in different modes. Outside, in the hall, stood a marble-mounted sideboard sent by Crabb Robinson. In the study-dining-room were her more sacred treasures. A visitor, regarding with interest the bust of Atkinson on the chimney-piece, crowned by a bas-relief of Mrs. Chapman and flanked by engravings of Garrison and Follen, was heard to say: “Ah, voilà ses saints !”

The garden, too, held its souvenirs. One friend supplied “a costly sundial fashioned like a Gothic font.” A sister made her a present of a grotto, with rustic seats. Macready strained his back planting two oaks. Wordsworth, offered oaks, said they were not remarkable enough and planted stone pines instead. He did the job competently, washed his hands in the watering-can, took Harriet’s hand between both his, wished her many happy years in her new home and added a piece of practical advice. Visitors would be sure to come to see her, not, of course, in such numbers as came to see *him*, but still enough to be a burden if she were not careful. She must promise to treat them as he and Dorothy used to treat the people who came to see them at

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Grasmere. She must tell them they would be welcome to a cup of tea, but that if they wanted meat they must pay for it. Harriet would make no promise. The rule did not commend itself to her genuinely hospitable nature, and she remembered that the cup of tea offered in the Wordsworth household was served without any proper allowance of cream.

The very turf for the lawn was provided by anonymous admirers. Wordsworth had quenched her hope of cutting turf from the hills by telling her it was the property of the dalesmen and that wherever it was cut the scar lasted a hundred years. Harriet had turned her thoughts to grass seed when she came down one morning to find a load of turf lying by the garden wall. An earthy note, sealed with a wafer, told her the sods were for "Harriet Martineau, a token of gratitude for the Forest and Game Law Tales. From a poacher." She had written a set of Tales exposing the cruelty and injustice of the Forest and Game Laws while she was in lodgings. Was the donor a genuine poacher, or a friend taking cover behind an illiterate scribe? She walked over to consult the Arnolds at Fox How, the note in her hand. The party she found there included Archbishop Whately, who pronounced, from his familiar acquaintance with anonymous letters, that the writing was that of an

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educated person disguised. When Harriet was gone, he was asked whether he really doubted the genuineness of the note. “Doubt it?” exclaimed Whately, who, although a firm phrenologist, had no love for Miss Martineau, “of course I doubt it: the woman wrote it herself!”

After a summer in her new home, disturbed by nothing worse than autograph-hunters, Harriet accepted an invitation to go to the East with some friends. She had hoped that Atkinson would be one of the party, but he went no further with them than Boulogne. Harriet went on through Egypt and Palestine, looking at the relics of the faiths of those countries through the “atheistical” lens supplied by her young friend. She sailed up the Nile, she travelled in the track of Moses through the desert, she saw Petra, she traversed Palestine. She prepared to write a book “illustrating the genealogy of the old faiths—the Egyptian, the Hebrew, the Christian and the Mohammedan.” She came back to The Knoll, after achieving a reconciliation with her mother at Liverpool, to settle down to work. She wrote to ask Atkinson whether honesty required that in discussing the birth, growth and corruption of the four faiths, she must necessarily avow the extent of her personal dissent from all the world’s theologies. Atkinson thought the exposure unnecessary. “Do you not feel strangely alone in

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your views on the highest subjects?" wrote Harriet. Yes, Atkinson admitted that he did, but less so than he used to. He considered that "much of the manner that has been thought pride in me has arisen from a sense of loneliness and non-sympathy with the opinions of others." Harriet replied by the wish that her parents had been of Mr. Atkinson's way of thinking, and rejoicing that she had his friendship and sympathy in her progress towards "philosophical atheism." The book, *Eastern Life, Past and Present*, was written and published by Moxon on what Harriet called "the usual terms," the publisher paying the author two-thirds of the profits. Under this contract the proceeds of the first edition enabled Harriet to pay off all the money she had borrowed to buy her land and build her house. The readers did not appear to be as much shocked as was anticipated.

Settled in Ambleside for the winter, Harriet remembered to begin on the improvement of her poorer neighbours. She invited them to hear her lecture on her Eastern travels, on sanitation, on English and American history. The course on sanitation, which included two terrifying demonstrations of the effect of alcohol on the brain and stomach, was undertaken with the ulterior motive of inducing the labourers to found a Building Society and put their earnings into property instead of into

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the pockets of public-house proprietors. The Society was founded and cottages were built. The lectures were all well attended and were probably well delivered, for Harriet had no difficulty in finding words and she knew exactly what she wanted to say. She was not sure, at first, whether her deafness might not make it difficult for her to pitch her voice to carry. She stationed one of the servants at the far end of the room with instructions to flutter a handkerchief if she could not be heard. But she had a robust voice and the signal was never used.

In addition to imparting knowledge and encouraging thrift, Miss Martineau undertook to set the district an example of good farming. There was a general presumption that a cow could not be maintained on less than three acres of land. She bought two cows and kept them both on two acres. She imported a Norfolk dairyman and his wife. The experiment succeeded, and she wrote a pamphlet about it which became as famous as any of her Tales. She was, indeed, an admirable model for small-holders and housekeepers. “Miss Martineau,” wrote Crabb Robinson, “makes herself an object of envy by the success of her domestic arrangements. She has built a cottage near her house, placed in it a Norfolk dairymaid, and has her poultry-yard and her piggery and her cowshed;

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and Mrs. Wordsworth declares she is a model in her household economy, making her servants happy and setting an example of activity to her neighbours. She is at the same time busy writing the continuation of Knight's *Pictorial History of England* and has just brought out a volume entitled *Household Education*, which has proved successful, and probably with good reason." This is a cheerful picture of an efficiently organised life. It is just the picture that Harriet wished her friends to see, and there is no doubt that for these years of peace at Ambleside she was very happy. She had her faith in Atkinson to sustain her; she was satisfied that her light set on The Knoll was illuminating the darkness of the backward countryside, and her working hours were devoted to producing books designed to instruct and to improve. *Household Education* was written "for Secularist parents," as an aid in the bringing-up of their children. She was surprised to find that it was quite well received by Christian parents as well as Secularists. Child study was a comparatively unexplored field and Miss Martineau's views on training were sane and progressive.

The second work mentioned in Crabb Robinson's letter was a more considerable task. *The History of the Thirty Years' Peace*, from the year 1815, had languished on Knight's hands after the publication of the first volume, and when he asked Harriet to



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From the drawing by George Richmond in the National
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write the two further volumes the subscribers had been kept waiting for two years. "I did not know at all whether I could write History," but she was ready to try, and although she "sank into a state of dismay" when she realised the magnitude of the undertaking, she soon recovered courage. In six months she had finished one stout volume, in another six she had completed the whole. She followed it up with another volume dealing with the first fifteen years of the century. Her own estimate of this work, published in the obituary notice of herself which she wrote for the *Daily News*, has been endorsed by one of the most eminent authorities on the history of the English people in the nineteenth century, and may therefore be appropriately quoted (10).

"All that can be done with contemporary history is to collect and methodise the greatest amount of reliable facts and distinct impressions, to amass sound material for the veritable historian of a future day—so consolidating, assimilating and vivifying the structure as to do for the future writer precisely that which the lapse of time and the oblivion which creeps over all transactions must prevent his doing for himself. This auxiliary usefulness is the aim of Harriet Martineau's history; and she was probably not mistaken in hoping for that much result from her labour." She added that

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the publication of the *History* had rendered the writer an unexpected personal service, since it completely dispelled the impression that she was a “dangerous Radical.”

The impression that she was a Radical the *History* could not dispel, for all her portraits and her judgments were dyed in the vats of the Philosophic Radicals. But the dangerous views of one age are the commonplaces of the next. Free Trade and *laissez-faire* were as respectable in 1850 as they were suspect in 1820. Her work has, in addition to its other qualities, a special value due to her first-hand knowledge of much of what happened behind the scenes of the parliamentary drama. Such knowledge is an incomparable aid to the selection of evidence. There seems to be no doubt that Knight chose well when he chose Miss Martineau to complete his history and that she performed her task competently.

IX

THE LAWS OF MAN'S NATURE AND
DEVELOPMENT

SINCE it was always necessary to Harriet's peace of mind that each new act of allegiance should be publicly registered, it became clear to her, some time before she had completed the *History*, that suitable means must be devised for proclaiming her conversion to Mr. Henry George Atkinson and his system. But the choice of these means was a problem needing careful consideration. It had been comparatively simple to demonstrate the necessity of Unitarianism, of Political Economy and of Abolitionism. There was the truth and here was Harriet Martineau to publish it. But how was she to demonstrate the necessity of Henry George Atkinson and to publish him? He had not, unfortunately, demonstrated this necessity himself in any reverberating manner. The light of his genius, which should have illuminated the heights, was hidden in a dark lantern. He had no real objection to acting as a beacon, but he happened to have achieved nothing to make him famous beyond his own circle of phreno-mesmerists.

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Harriet had done what she could to spread the cult among her friends, and Margaret Fuller, at least, admired him without reserves. But this, though gratifying, was not enough. He must be displayed to a larger audience. He must write something that could be printed. But Atkinson wrote nothing except long letters to Harriet designed to guide her from the endless mazes of metaphysicians to the straight trail blazed by Bacon and trampled by phrenologists.

Her attentive study of his letters brought an inspiration. She suggested that they should produce a book of letters together. Harriet Martineau's name would procure immediate attention for Atkinson's teachings, and since her letters would be chiefly questions to elicit his explanations, the relation between them, of master and disciple, could not be overlooked. By this means her accomplished reputation would serve as the basis to establish his. Atkinson agreed to play the part assigned. They set to work letter-writing, and the result, *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development*, was published in 1851.

As this book scandalised some of Harriet's acquaintance and was the cause of an open breach with her brother James which lasted to the end of her life, it is worth while to look a little at the horrifying doctrine expounded by Atkinson to his

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pupil. In reply to her first question, “ How would you have one set about the study of the powers of Man in order to understand his nature and his place, business and pleasure in the universe ? ” the teacher urged the use of the inductive method proposed by Bacon. Inquiries conducted by this method must infallibly lead any intelligent person to the conclusion that Mind is a function of Matter and a product of the brain. The first and most essential stage of the inquiry must therefore be a thorough examination of the structure and functions of the brain.

Atkinson’s account of the brain was based on the theories of Gall and Spurzheim, but it went far beyond them in the complexity of the phrenological organs described and the precise limitations of their areas. He claimed that he was in the happy position of being able to make more delicate and reliable experiments than his predecessors by the use of an instrument which they lacked, an instrument as indispensable to the student of the structure of the brain as the telescope to the student of the movements of the heavenly bodies. This useful instrument was “ the sensitive and more concentrated or exalted condition of the observing powers under mesmerism.” Not that his correspondent must suppose him credulous in accepting the statements of somnambules or mesmerised

persons. He believed none of their reports of their communion with spirits or their visions of another world; but he had profound faith in the clairvoyance of a lady who, when mesmerised, could look into her own brain and report on the size and position of each "organ." Thanks to this valuable auxiliary, Atkinson was able to announce that the cerebellum contained all the organs connected with muscular conditions, bodily pains and pleasures, tissue renewal, secretions and growth. Passing to the cerebrum, he allotted areas to the organs of Hearing, Colour, Light, Smell, Taste, Sound, Weight, Feeling, Number, Size, Form, Time, Locality, Individuality, Wit, Comparison, Language, Order, Benevolence, De-structiveness, and a host of others, including an organ for Quality of Food, another for Sense of Right and another for Love of Labour, "the right exercise of which is such a spring of satisfaction." Buried in the centre of her brain, the mesmerised observer had found "the eye of the mind," the organ of the intuitive faculty which she was presumably exercising from some unexplained distance. The cerebrum was observed to contain in addition several organs which duplicated or reflected those of the cerebellum on a higher plane. Thus, while the cerebellum contained the organ for sexual union, the cerebrum contained the organ for con-

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jugal love. It was to be noted, too, that the organ of Conscientiousness divided into three, the Sense of Right, the Impulse to Candour and the Love of Truth.

Harriet replied to her correspondent's confident account of the position of more than seventy separate organs, that it gave her "a glimmering of insight into phrenology." She added that his discovery of duplicate organs in the cerebrum and cerebellum, "where a hasty observer would conceive of no duplicate," his remarkable observation of the threefold nature of Conscientiousness and several other curious results of his investigation, had made a profound impression on her. She asked for more. Atkinson thought she might like to know that there were nine senses, those ordinarily recognised being increased by a muscular sense, a sense of temperature, common sensation and a magnetic sense. But she must not imagine that the sense channels were the only means of receiving impressions. He quoted cases of somnambules who could read without their eyes, and spoke of a lady born blind who saw both form and colour in her dreams. Harriet was greatly interested. She was convinced that the time would come when, by the use of the magnetic sense, men would be able to read the future as easily and certainly as they now read the past. She capped

Atkinson's tales of sense impressions acquired by unusual routes with an account of how she herself had twice, in a mesmeric trance, "received knowledge" in a form so abstract that it had no perceptible connection with any sense impressions. Nothing else in her experience could at all compare with this "melting away of all forms, aspects and arrangements under which we ordinarily view nature, and its fusion into the system of forces which is presented to the intellect in the magnetic state."

The master, in his next letter, warned the disciple not to be too sure that her experience was not a mere delusion and adduced several instances of hallucinations. He went on to an anticipation of the hypothesis of the "unconscious self" so familiar to later psychologists. "In the intuitive or unconscious condition, or sphere, or faculty, as we may call it, exists the voice, or oracle, or guardian angel, which sleepers listen to in the trance." He was aware, too, of the phenomenon of dissociation, and referred to one of his patients "who went into six distinct states of memory and consciousness, recognising me afresh, and in a different manner, in each."

In this letter, Atkinson, while emphasising the need for keeping experiment clear of theological prejudice, introduced the name of God. "Know-

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ledge," he wrote, "establishes the true relations of things as a whole, and has only one God." He qualified his statement by declaring God to be incomprehensible and unknown, but Harriet was disturbed. "Pray tell me," she asked, "whether you do not, in using the name of God, use merely another name for law? And when you speak of God as the origin of all things, what is it that you mean?" She asked other difficult questions. She wanted Mr. Atkinson to explain what light is and how it is that the thoughts of the dying can affect other persons at a distance, and what is the cause of our continued sense of personal identity in spite of a constantly changing bodily organism.

Atkinson struggled to reply, but his mind did not work well in response to questions. It was clear that he had not been educated to pass examinations. He hastened to excuse himself for having used the word "God," by which he meant "the cause of things, itself without a cause." He returned to the analysis of Mind, explaining it as the varying association of ideas and feelings set up by the action of the phrenological organs of the brain. The Mind could be regarded as a republic, with the Will as President. Not, of course, in any sense a free Will. "Free will!" exclaimed Atkinson. "The very idea is enough to make a Democritus fall on his back and roar with laughter,

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and a more serious thinker despair of bringing men to reason—to experience the advantages of knowledge, and the calming influence of a recognition of universal law and necessity.” But, alas, how far was mankind from this reasonable ideal. After pleading as fervently as any latter-day pedagogue for study of “the child,” he denounced the uselessness and vanity of university education, an evil from which he appeared not to have suffered himself, and the immorality of orthodox religion. From Christianity he passed to Christ, whose miraculous powers he attributed, like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, to clairvoyance and mesmeric influence. Harriet, while preferring to attribute the miracles to legend rather than to mesmerism, was in full agreement with her friend as to the inadequacy of the Christian religion, which left so little space for the domestic affections or scientific research. Atkinson, after declaring Christian legislation to be in a state of utter depravity, protested that all conditions and opinions are the best that can be in their time, and brought his last and shortest letter to an end by a renewed assertion of the need for a right method of inquiry into the laws of man’s nature and development.

The letters were preceded by seventeen mottoes, from the works of Bacon, Montaigne, Sydney Smith, Mill, Gall, Buffon, Whately and Davy.

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They were followed by an appendix of ninety-six pages of further quotations from selected authors.

Nobody who reads the book is likely to think it a convincing piece of exposition. Several of Atkinson's observations in the field of psychical research were interesting and promising, but his praiseworthy belief in scientific experiment as a reliable means of gaining knowledge was not accompanied by any perception of the need for the experimenter to be trained for the task. Harriet herself, for all Dilke's disbelief in her judgment, had a much better sense of what constitutes good evidence than her correspondent. It was not Atkinson's fault that he grew up in an age when Gall's account of the brain was widely held and there were twenty-nine phrenological societies in England; but there is nothing but his inadequate mental equipment to blame for his confidence in the unsupported testimony of the lady who was so obliging as to look into her own brain for his benefit. And Harriet, notwithstanding her eager good-will and admiration, was not the best collaborator for him. She could not restrain herself from asking for reasons and causes, trying to go behind the phenomena which Atkinson repeatedly declared to be the only possible objects of knowledge. She insisted on his providing theories about how the dying can affect people at a distance

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when he wanted to do no more than tell ghost stories.

Of his way of writing Harriet said : “ The style seems to me—as it does to many better judges than myself—as beautiful as it is remarkable. Eminent writers and readers have said that they could not lay the book down till they had run it through—led on through the night by the beauty of the style no less than by the interest of the matter.” That the style may have seemed admirable to Harriet is comprehensible enough, for she was enthusiastic about every aspect of Mr. Atkinson. It would be more interesting to know who the other eminent writers and readers were. The apostle of Bacon had no scruple about beginning a letter like this :

“ Man appearing to be the highest development of nature, and his mind being evolved from this development—a glimmering light in the midst of infinite darkness, nevertheless in its inter-relations presenting, as far as it goes, a true impress of what is (and, if not true in relation to the universe and to absolute truth, at least true in relation to Man, and as a corresponding harmony, which is all that we need desire)—it is reasonable to suppose that Man in his completed growth would possess as many channels of sense as there are different characteristics in external nature and his own body,

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or distinct energies or emotions arising from such conditions."

Harriet's brisk little notes of comment and interrogation fall like the patter of welcome showers into the tangled jungle of Atkinson's verbiage.

But whatever incoherence there may be in his speculations and whatever verbosity in his manner, no reader can doubt that both contributors to the book were persons of the highest moral principles. Neither their comforting belief in the doctrine of Necessity nor their contemptuous abandonment of Christianity could prevent either of them from preaching self-denial and altruism. No critic could fairly attack them on ethical grounds, but they were taken to task in many quarters for their irrelevant outbreak against Christian theology.

Harriet had quite expected to launch a thunderbolt. She had gone so far as to envisage legal penalties for blasphemy as well as social ostracism, seeing Atkinson as a new and more radiant Shelley. Some of her friends, to whom she had read portions of Mr. Atkinson's letters, shared her view of the possible effect. Charlotte Brontë was deeply concerned because she feared Harriet's influence for good would be completely destroyed. And no doubt a number of readers were shocked. Macready heard of the book at a dinner-party given by Dickens: "Alas ! alas ! as they at table reported

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it, a direct and positive declaration and avowal of atheistical opinions ! Now, though I do not think any reasoning being can *really* entertain such a belief, yet there are persons who may persuade themselves they do, or, reasoning *partially*, may think they do. But *what right* have these persons to promulgate their opinions ? Whom will they make better or happier by them ? ” Poor Macready had suffered another disillusion. To think that the author of *Deerbrook* should be promulgating atheistical opinions !

Miss Mitford, always one of the best and coolest of Miss Martineau’s critics, dealt more justly by the book. She wondered how Archbishop Whately would like being cited, among the mottoes, in a book called atheistical. For her part, she would hardly, she thought, have given it so hard a name. “ I should rather doubt whether either the lady or the gentleman quite knows the exact thing that the letters do mean.”

A little later, a remarkably scathing article on the *Letters* appeared in the *Prospective Review*, a Unitarian quarterly, edited by four ministers, J. H. Thom, J. J. Tayler, James Martineau and Charles Wicksteed. This article, entitled “ Mesmeric Atheism,” was a trenchant assault on the doctrines expounded by the authors. While bracketing the collaborators together in several sarcastic gibes, the

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reviewer directed his hottest fire against Atkinson, a pitifully easy prey for a trained intellect, and it was evident that considerable pains had been taken to collect ammunition for the attack. “When we are called on to listen to Mr. Atkinson as to Mahammed and the angel Gabriel . . . telling us stories, not indeed of men changed into apes, but of apes changed into men, when the oracles are delivered *pro re nata* with the proverbial incoherence of Sybilline literature, we feel impelled to ask, ‘*Who* is the prophet that knows these things of himself, and has any man seen his marvellous works?’” The reviewer had qualified himself to answer the question. He had looked up phrenological communications made by Atkinson to the *Medical Times* and the *Zoist*. He had learnt on good authority that Atkinson’s discoveries about the functions of the cerebellum were unsupported by orthodox science. “He may be wrong,” the writer remarked, “about the cerebellum, but he has made great discoveries in syntax. Amativeness he may have been unable to depose, but he can put the parts of speech to rout. In logic and rhetoric—grammar and punctuation some future Quintilian will celebrate him as unique. Not that this is apparent in the present volume of Letters; for Miss Martineau too seems to have begrudged him his fair fame, and, by a tyrannical exercise of

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mesmeric sympathy, reduced his English to the standard of her own."

"But enough," he concluded, after flaying Atkinson with citations from his earlier lucubrations, "of this heirophant of the New Atheism. With grief we say that we remember nothing in literary history more melancholy than that Harriet Martineau should be prostrated at the feet of such a master; should lay down at his bidding her early faith in moral obligation, in the living God, in the immortal sanctities; should glory in the infection of his blind arrogance and scorn, mistaking them for wisdom and pity; and meekly undertake to teach him grammar in return. . . . If this be a specimen of mesmeric victories, such a conquest is more damaging than a thousand defeats." Even his veneration for Bacon was counted to poor Atkinson for unrighteousness. "Mr. Atkinson appears to stand in need of so little support, beyond the flatteries of his correspondent, that he might have spared the memory of Lord Bacon the degradation of serving as his referee."

There was no possible doubt about the authorship of this unsigned review. It was written by James Martineau (11). According to his own account, he undertook the exceedingly painful duty of exposing the pretensions of his sister's collaborator in reluctant response to the insistence

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of his co-editors. This version was, however, denied by at least one of these associates, who appeared to think that Martineau was under no compulsion to review the book himself. Whether he entered on the task reluctantly or not, the review itself bears all the marks of having been composed with gusto. It was the outcome of very strong feeling. If his statement that he had never so much as heard Atkinson's name before is to be taken literally, he might well be amazed and horrified by "the kind of fascination" perverting his sister's judgment, to which the book is, indeed, a clear testimony. It may seem unlikely that any member of Harriet's family, especially one living near his mother and sisters at Liverpool, could fail to have heard the name of the man who had played a dominant part in her life for six years, but there is nothing surprising in James Martineau's intense annoyance when the strength of Atkinson's influence was revealed in the *Letters*. It is conceivable that the review was a deliberate attempt to rescue his unhappy sister from that fatal enchantment, to tear the scales from Harriet's eyes and show her an image of her associate reduced to his proper dimensions, to win her back to the fold and the shepherd she had so mistakenly deserted. But the tactics he adopted were scarcely of a winning nature. Harriet bitterly resented the attack, which

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she felt even more for Atkinson than for herself. She had persuaded him to write a book, and James had taken advantage of the opportunity it gave him to behave unforgivably. She was deeply offended and would have no further communication of any kind with her brother, as he discovered at the end of three years when, on proposing a visit to The Knoll, he found that "my sister's heart and house were closed against me." He maintained to the end that his own affection for Harriet survived all reproaches and mistakes and, "if she had permitted, would at any time have taken me to her side for unconditional return to the old relation."

Whatever may be thought of James Martineau's view of his editorial duty, which caused him to pick out a philosophically negligible book for a full-dress essay in denunciation, and of his attitude towards a breach of relations which could last three years without his knowledge, there is neither mystery nor surprise about Harriet's reactions. She behaved well. She made no public protest at the time, and in the *Autobiography*, freely used for self-justification in other directions, she allowed herself only a brief reference to the insults received from "one of my nearest relations." She directed Mrs. Chapman, who was charged with the composition of a volume complementary to Harriet's

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personal narrative, to "be as gentle as you can when you speak of my brother James." But Mrs. Chapman, who did not find it in her heart to be lenient, interpreted the instruction with considerable liberality.

Before the review had appeared, Harriet was engaged on a new and arduous piece of work. She was much too eager for new experience to rest, like Atkinson, content to quote the *Instauratio Magna* for an unlimited stretch of years. And for her next adventure she used her own intelligence. She began to examine the work of a contemporary teacher who, in this respect like Bacon, hoped to make a complete inventory of scientific knowledge the basis of a new social philosophy. This teacher was Auguste Comte, born four years earlier than Harriet and just beginning to be known by reputation in England. J. S. Mill, an ardent franco-phile, had given Comte the credit for a number of ideas incorporated in his *System of Logic* and subscribed to the fund for his maintenance raised by Littré in 1848. The *Cours de Philosophie Positive* had been issued in six volumes a few years earlier. Lewes had written a short account of the system for Knight, and this publication, with Littré's epitome, determined Harriet to read the volumes for herself. Comte's philosophy bore a striking resemblance, she thought, to some of Mr. Atkin-

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son's views. She asked him if he had read the philosopher, but he replied that he knew nothing of Comte "directly," and that his own thoughts came "by labour in the fields or wild commons, and on the bench in Regent's Park." Harriet ordered the first volume of the *Philosophie Positive* from London. It came on April 24th. On the 26th, as she was "amazed and somewhat ashamed to see," by her diary, she began to "dream" of translating it. On the 27th she was planning to realise the dream. Her first idea was to translate the original lectures as they stood, but she turned a willing ear to the suggestion that a summary of the system would be more valuable. No advice could have been more to her taste, for she was always happy analysing and condensing. She began at once, and, in spite of interruptions, finished writing a clear and readable abstract of the system of Positive Philosophy in about two years. The work would have been done sooner but for a secret preoccupation which kept her busy during the autumn of 1851. Charlotte Brontë, as well as other friends, had repeatedly urged her to write another novel. She had steadily refused, maintaining that her fiction-writing days were over. But what persuasion could not accomplish was effected by the greater force of example. As she had been inspired twenty years earlier by the study

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of Jane Austen to write *Deerbrook*, so now admiration for *Pendennis* made her resolve to try her hand at a novel again. Her appreciation of Thackeray did not extend to *Vanity Fair*, which she disliked "from the moral disgust it occasions," but *Pendennis* stirred her to rivalry. She confided to Charlotte Brontë, but to no one else, that she was writing a novel and consulted her about getting it published anonymously. Charlotte lent herself joyfully to the conspiracy. She interested her own publisher, George Smith, in the scheme, supplied Harriet with envelopes addressed to him in her own hand, and forwarded all the correspondence from the publisher to her friend. The novel went forward slowly. Harriet discovered that the habit of writing history had destroyed the careless rapture of composition which had so easily produced her earlier fiction. She arranged and sifted and compared, carrying the methods of historical narrative into tale-telling. She persevered, however, in spite of the difficulty of accounting for her time to Mr. Atkinson, who could not understand why she progressed so slowly with Comte. The novel was to be as much of a surprise to him as to anyone else. At Christmas she sent the first volume of *Oliver Wild* to Charlotte Brontë, who "wrote gloriously" about it. But George Smith wrote less gloriously. Harriet declared that he was afraid

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to publish it “on account of some favourable representations and auguries on behalf of the Catholics.” She put the manuscript away, with an idea of finishing it later, but before the opportunity came her enthusiasm had cooled. She wrote to tell Charlotte that she had decided to suppress her “foolish prank,” but this light dismissal was not quite accepted at its face value. “It is obvious,” said Charlotte, “that she is much chagrined.”

The friendship between the two did not last much longer. It had begun with a warm admiration on Miss Brontë’s side for Miss Martineau’s influence and powers. She had stayed at The Knoll, where she found Harriet “exhaustless in strength and spirits, and indefatigable in the faculty of labour: she is a great and good woman; of course not without peculiarities. . . . She is both hard and warm-hearted, abrupt and affectionate. I believe she is not at all conscious of her own absolutism. When I tell her of it, she denies the charge warmly; and then I laugh at her. I believe she almost rules Ambleside.” Charlotte had trembled for the result of the publication of the *Laws of Man’s Nature and Development*. She had been taken to task by Miss Wooler for her continued acquaintance with the atheist, and had replied that if Miss Wooler knew Miss Martineau as she did and had shared “the proofs of her rough but

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genuine kindness and seen how she secretly suffers from abandonment," she would be the last to give her up. It was not atheism which separated them but the incompatibility of their views on love. Charlotte asked for a frank criticism of *Villette*. Harriet gave it without too much regard for the author's feelings. She disliked both the kind and the degree of the love Charlotte exalted in her books. They had some further correspondence, but Charlotte found herself unable to accept invitations to The Knoll. "I have declined being her visitor," she wrote in the spring of 1853, "and bid her good-bye. Of course some bitterness remains in her heart. It is best so, however; the antagonism of our natures and principles was too serious to be trifled with."

The appearance of the atheistical *Letters* did not, however, quite blast Miss Martineau's reputation and she was asked the year after their publication to write leading articles for the *Daily News*. The offer came as a surprise, for she did not know Hunt, the editor, and she had no experience in writing leading articles. She was busy enough, with Comte, with descriptions of manufacturing and other productive processes for *Household Words*, with a course of lectures on American history for the Ambleside Mechanics. But she recognised that the proposal opened up exceptionally fine vistas

of influence and usefulness, and she agreed to try, beginning with one or two articles a week. She soon found that leading articles were a remarkably easy kind of composition, costing no more effort than two or three evening hours of mild concentration and leaving the fresh early part of the day free for the Positive Philosophy.

In the autumn of 1852 she went to see with her own eyes the condition of Ireland, the results of her observation being published in the *Daily News* three times a week. Her remarks on the state of Ireland were sensible and readable, but she had no natural understanding of the Irish temperament and measured everything by her English standards. The best that could happen to the Irish, she considered, was that they should be schooled into something like the more sober, honest and hard-working English industrial classes. She hoped for English capital to be a source of wages for Irish labourers, and she looked to the schools to educate the coming generations into good intelligent citizens. She deplored the superstition of the Catholics and the missionary efforts of the Protestants; she thought the priests rapacious and the Protestant clergy disgracefully overpaid. She did useful work in ventilating the grievances of the Irish tenantry, for she understood the relation between tenant rights and the improvement of the land even if

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she did not sympathise with the view of the tenants that the land was theirs by right and their landlords' by confiscation.

Back at Ambleside, Harriet continued her work and increased the number of her leading articles. Her only troubles were domestic. Jane, the "apocalyptic housemaid," decided, after hearing her mistress lecture about Australia, to emigrate to that land of promise. Another treasure, Martha, married the master of the Bristol Ragged Schools. The wedding was conducted from The Knoll. Harriet herself arranged the flowers, laid the wedding breakfast, shut up the cat, and generally acted as benevolent godmother, a part she always played admirably. She missed Jane and Martha, but other servants came, as devoted and as improvable, for she was a good mistress.

The English version of Comte's work came out in November 1853, and was recognised by those best qualified to judge, including the philosopher himself, as an excellent piece of work. Miss Martineau had reduced his six volumes of ungraceful French to two volumes of clear English, a very considerable feat. If England had advanced to the adoption of Positivism, as soon as Harriet hoped it might, her book would have become the standard text-book. As it was, it made several converts, and quickened further enquiry into the Philo-

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sophy. For Harriet it was a magnificent mental discipline which strengthened the fibres of her mind for the heavy work of the years to follow. Long, careful articles were contributed to the *Westminster Review* on England's foreign policy and on the results of the 1851 census. A series of tales "with sanitary morals" was written for *Household Words*. The output of leading articles continued steadily. The career of eminent usefulness which Harriet had permitted herself to seek at the age of twenty-seven was abundantly in evidence in the activities of the woman of fifty.

X

FROM THE MOUNTAIN

THE spring of 1854 was pleasantly diversified for Harriet by the need for making a complete tour of the Lake District. She had promised to write a Guide-book for a local publisher, and although she was already familiar with the hills and dales and lakes, she was conscientiously determined to revise her knowledge and to test the resources of the inns. Accompanied by six friends, she jogged from place to place in a covered wagonnette. They all tested the inns. They found them wonderfully cheap and good. Harriet was rather vexed to discover, at the end of the tour, that the financial manager for the party had successfully bargained for special prices, using the forthcoming Guide-book as a weapon, but it was too late then to do more than register displeasure.

The *Complete Guide to the English Lakes* fully justifies its title. It is complete with pictures, a geological map, a record of the flowering plants, ferns and mosses, and a directory of residents. Harriet's share in the work is a flowing description of the scenery, accompanied by clear indications of routes, views and hotels. With anecdotes freely

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sprinkled about, it is the archetype of that large class of friendly topographical books represented by the “Highways and Byways” series. In one respect Miss Martineau’s Guide surpasses these in human interest, for she peopled her District with its living occupants. The tourist “must not mistake for Fox How the gem of a house that he sees—the cream-coloured one, veiled in roses, with the conservatories beside it, just under the wooded precipice: that is Foxghyll, the residence of Hornby Roughsedge, Esq. Approaching Ambleside, the first house to the left is Lesketh How, the residence of Dr. Davy: the white house on the right is Tranby Lodge, the abode of Alfred Barkworth, Esq.; and the house on the rising ground behind the chapel is the Knoll, the residence of Miss H. Martineau.” This is just the kind of information desired by large numbers of tourists.

The late summer months Harriet habitually spent out of range of autograph-hunting trippers, and this year she stayed for some time at Sydenham, where she passed several days, very agreeably, in the Crystal Palace, an edifice which excited her to lyrical admiration. “A palace of opal—ruddy in the dawn, a blue canopy like the air at midday and golden at sunset—a palace evoked from nothingness by the spirit of the time, and consecrated to the pleasure of the people.” The crowds of sight-

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seers led her to hope and expect that large-scale exhibitions were destined to take the place of theatres as the national recreation. "Let it not be a phenomenon only," she prayed, "but an institution."

In the autumn she went home to work, but she was bothered by visual disturbances and other symptoms which led her to suspect that there was something seriously wrong with her physical condition. She suffered increasingly from palpitations and breathlessness, and when she went up to London in January to consult Dr. Peter Meere Latham, a specialist for diseases of the heart, she was convinced in advance that he would confirm her belief that she was incurable.

He saw her on the 23rd, and on the following day she wrote to warn Mrs. Chapman that she was mortally ill with organic disease of the heart, although she added that Latham had told her he could only give her his impression, until he had watched her a little longer. "The treatment prescribed only shows the desperation of the case." On the 31st, at Latham's request, she was examined by Dr. Thomas Watson, and she stated in the *Autobiography* that his opinion, "formed on examination, without prior information from Dr. Latham or me, was the same as Dr. Latham's. Indeed the case is as plain as can well be. . . .

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Before I left London the sinking-fits which are characteristic of the disease began to occur; and it has since been perfectly understood by us all that the alternative lies between death at any hour in one of these sinking-fits, or by dropsy, if I live for the disease to run its course. Though I had expected some such account of the case, I was rather surprised that it caused so little emotion in me."

This is a very distinct echo of the entry made in her Journal after Sir Charles Clarke's visit to Tynemouth, and it is hard to resist the conclusion that she found a real satisfaction in being an incurable invalid. She wrote to announce her approaching end to her family and was promptly joined in London by her niece, Maria, who promised never to leave her again. In charge of this niece, her executor and her maid, she was taken back to Westmorland in the "invalid carriage" of the railway company. Once at home again, she made all her preparations for immediate death, and for the following twenty-one years she lived in the constant apprehension that each hour might be her last, an apprehension sympathetically and unquestioningly shared by her attendants. If Atkinson, or any other mesmerist, tried to give her relief by the treatment which had worked so marvellously in 1844, it was without any effect. She wrote to Fox, a year after her return, that she was being kept alive by wine,

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laudanum and ether. Towards the end of her life she was taking from twelve to fifteen grains of opium a day.

She does not appear to have wavered at any moment in her conviction, or at any rate in her declaration, that her heart was diseased. She stated in the obituary notice which she supplied in advance to the *Daily News* that "her disease was enlargement and deterioration of the heart, the fatal character of which was discovered in January 1855." Naturally she could not have foreseen that the young Ambleside doctor who began to attend her in 1871 would conduct a post-mortem examination in 1876, which revealed the cause of her years of suffering and discomfort as the slow growth of an abdominal cyst. He had suspected the existence of this tumour earlier, but Miss Martineau had assured him that he was mistaken and would permit no examination while she lived. Neither could she have foreseen that after her death one at least of the physicians she had consulted in London would publicly deny that he had ever said anything to lead her to believe that her heart was incurably diseased. Sir Thomas Watson's memory was clear on this point, although he admitted that Miss Martineau disbelieved his reassurances, looking upon them as well-meant and amiable attempts to soothe and tranquillise a doomed patient. "I feel

persuaded," added Watson, "that she must have had a similar opinion from Dr. Latham, than whom no physician of that date was more competent to form a correct judgment about affections of the heart."

What Latham finally said, after keeping the case under observation, either to his patient or to anyone else, is matter for conjecture. He died before Harriet Martineau and there is no available evidence. There is, however, good evidence that Sir Thomas Watson, and therefore his colleague, was perfectly well aware of the presence of a large abdominal cyst in a position likely to interfere with the action of the heart, and Watson declared that Latham held the view that the famous mesmeric cure had been no real cure, but only an aid happily coinciding with a period when the internal growth shifted to a position giving immediate relief. This opinion was confirmed by the results of the post-mortem examination as explained by Sir Spencer Wells, an explanation ignored in Mrs. Fenwick Miller's biography, which insists that Miss Martineau's death was due to a cause entirely different from the illness she had suffered from at Tynemouth, leaves the mesmeric cure in full possession of the field, and reiterates the statement that Latham and Watson had told her her heart was fatally diseased. (See Note 12, p. 245).

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The point which is, unfortunately, left obscure is whether Harriet was told of the tumour in 1855 or not. If not, she had the excuse of her symptoms for clinging to her theory of heart disease. But if she was told, she had, perhaps, even better reasons for refusing to believe what she heard. To give up her heart disease and to admit the existence of the tumour would have meant the abandonment of a position held ardently and publicly for ten years. The mortification of being forced to disbelieve in the complete efficacy of the mesmeric cure would be further embittered by the justification such a recantation would provide for the sceptical disapproval of her family. Greenhow would gloat, and James would think himself justified in his cruel and wicked contempt for Mr. Atkinson. Her friends too would begin to pity her as the deluded victim of fraudulent and sacrilegious malpractices.

Whether the persuasion of heart disease was a conscious or an unconscious refuge from the truth, Harriet held to it for the rest of her life, occupying to general admiration the position of doomed but cheerful invalid. She was neither impatient nor exacting and she took pains to ensure, as far as she could, the health and enjoyment of those in charge of her. The death of her niece, Maria, in 1864, was a shattering grief, but when a younger sister, Jane, came to take Maria's place, she was constantly

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thinking of plans for brightening Jane's life and improving her health. A difficult daughter and an uncertain sister, Harriet was a most kind and reliable aunt.

The first literary duty that she took up when she discovered that she had not died quite as soon as she expected was the task of writing the *Autobiography* laid aside at Tynemouth. This was accomplished in three months, the sheets printed off at once, corrected by the author, stereotyped, insured, and packed away in the printer's office ready for issue the moment she should be dead. The obituary notice written later for the *Daily News* directed the attention of readers in several passages to the forthcoming *Autobiography*.

When it did at last appear, the *Autobiography* distressed some of her friends so much that they wished she had never written it. The difficulty of the art was imperfectly realised by Harriet, who fell into several of the traps waiting for autobiographers. Her memories were richly loaded with all the personal explanations she had never had enough chance of making public, and she found in the *Autobiography* a magnificent opportunity of explaining everything to her own satisfaction, without fear of contradiction. She found too a good canvas for brushing in the portraits of the celebrities she had known without using prettier tones than she

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felt to be deserved. Those who loved and admired her, as many people did, declared that she did her generous nature grave injustice in this aggressive, boastful and often ill-natured record of her life and opinions. They urged in extenuation that it was written at a peculiarly trying period of her life, in great haste, under difficult conditions. No doubt if she had never committed herself to autobiography, if she had been content to let her life be told by her letters instead of by herself, the picture handed down to us would have been more amiable than the one we have. Harriet was no exception to the general rule that people write and talk to their friends and acquaintances more politely than they think of them. Since, however, she insisted on having her letters destroyed, since she took the trouble to write her own commentary on her life and to preserve it without a word of revision or apology for more than twenty years, we may fairly conclude that she had drawn herself as she wanted to be remembered. There could be nothing in the *Autobiography* that was not in the writer, for no memory treasures what is not essentially its own. Disputes over publisher's terms do not rankle for half a lifetime in a mind not disposed to look for injury, and persistent self-justification is tempting only to a nature perennially concerned to create an effect.

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The accuracy of the *Autobiography*, as a statement of facts, has been challenged by others besides James Martineau, whose criticisms, printed at the end of this volume, although ostensibly concerned with Mrs. Miller's *Life*, are often aimed through her at his sister's narrative. It is not surprising that Harriet went astray in places, for her memories were at the mercy of a lively imagination which could be trusted to remove any inconvenient stumbling-blocks to her view of what must have happened. When she had finished, she felt that the tale she had told should be completed by someone else, someone who could show what she had been to the world, while her own volumes showed what the world had been to her. It is said that she asked Professor William Gregory, a firm believer in mesmerism and a friend of Mr. Atkinson's, to do her this service, but he was too busy. It was finally entrusted to Mrs. Chapman, whose *Memorials* were published as the third volume of the set, the *Autobiography* filling the first two. Several critics deplored the fact that Miss Martineau gave the task to a friend who had nothing beyond her devotion to guide her through the pile of documents handed over unreservedly to her discretion, but those who are really interested in the development of a remarkable woman must at least be grateful for the large number of quotations from journals and letters

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which Mrs. Chapman's discretion allowed her to publish.

As soon as the *Autobiography* was off her mind, Harriet resumed her other work, and although she was often too ill to see visitors, she was seldom, until within the last few years of her life, too ill to write. She contributed, in all, sixteen hundred and forty-two leading articles to the *Daily News*, work she enjoyed almost more than any other kind. She was well qualified for it. Her adventure in writing history had provided her with the background needed to balance her appreciation of contemporary events. Her political sympathies seemed to coincide precisely with those of successive editors of the Liberal daily, and her style, clear and flowing as it was, lacked none of the pompous dignity so necessary to the leading articles of influential newspapers of the last century. She wrote on a variety of subjects—education, agriculture, foreign policy, economics, anything she liked. When the Mutiny broke out, she wrote a series of articles on British Rule in India, which were republished in a volume, and followed them by *Suggestions for the Future Government of India*, a plea for leaving the administration in the hands of the East India Company. The American Civil War gave her a handsome opportunity for bringing into action her knowledge of the people and the Constitution of the United

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States. Every other day the *Daily News* threw its weight into the Northern scale, and Forster is said to have declared that Harriet Martineau was doing more than anyone else in the country to keep England on the right side. Florence Nightingale's schemes for the reform of army hygiene were ventilated in the *Daily News*. One day a telegram from Miss Nightingale urged Harriet to "agitate, agitate for Lord de Grey in place of Sir George Lewis." It was the first intimation the leader-writer had that the War Office had lost its Minister, and she immediately took up her pen and agitated. In 1861 she assured Miss Nightingale that the *Daily News* was prepared to let her "harass the Commander-in-Chief as he was never harassed before—that is, I will write a leader against him every Saturday for as many weeks as there are heads of accusation against him and his Department." She had already published a volume on *England and her Soldiers* to place before the people, in popular language, the results of the Royal Commission on the Sanitary Condition of the Army with some further views of Florence Nightingale's.

The *Daily News* was by no means her only market. Several of her themes needed more development than was possible in a leading article, and for these she fell back on the quarterlies. At first she sent her contributions only to the *West-*

minster, which offered the best platform for her opinions. She had backed the *Westminster* financially when it was in difficulties, she had given articles for nothing when the editor found himself embarrassed for cash for payments, and she was very much annoyed when he made so bold as to return an article on *Meddlesome Legislation* directed against the operation of the Factory Acts, because he considered her attack on Dickens and Horner too outspoken. The particular trouble at the time was about the legislation for fencing machinery. Harriet, hearing that an Association of Factory Occupiers had been formed, stigmatised by Dickens as the "Association for the Mangling of Operatives," offered them her article as a pamphlet. The Factory Occupiers were delighted. They acknowledged Miss Martineau's pamphlet to be a valuable factor in the victory they subsequently won over fencing, and they offered her an appropriation of a hundred guineas for charity in token of their gratitude. For two years Harriet sent nothing to the ungrateful *Westminster*, but it was too Radical to be permanently boycotted, and she published an article on the American Union in 1857, following this up with a spirited attack on crinolines. Other articles went to the same Review, but in 1858 Harriet wrote to Reeve, the editor of the *Edinburgh* and one of the Norwich

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cousinhood, to offer him occasional contributions. He published a long article on *Female Industry*, which drew attention to the large number of women in the country earning their own living and emphasised the need for their enfranchisement. In another article Harriet denounced the tyranny of Trade Unions, and a little later she wrote in whole-hearted sympathy with the work of the Co-operative Societies.

In addition to her long articles—which were heavy even for a quarterly—and regular letters to the Boston *Anti-Slavery Standard*, Harriet sent frequent contributions to *Once a Week*, some signed by her own name and others “From the Mountain.” Here she wrote about the physical and moral hygiene needed by governesses, bakers, artists, nurses, the aged and others. Here she instructed servants in their duties, families about their budget, women in general about rational dress (including the danger of goloshes) and the necessity for better education, and the general public about house building and farming. In that happy miscellany of prose and verse, Harriet Martineau’s articles are easily recognisable without any signature as the most improving and didactic of the collection. When she was asked to contribute some fiction instead of drawing unadorned morals without intermission, she wrote “*Historiettes*,” illustrating the

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political and economic principles underlying the events of history. As time went on, her contributions became more and more political, and *Once a Week* served her as a useful supplement to the *Daily News* for placing the Radical creed before the people of England.

The work she did between 1855 and 1866, when she gave up leader-writing, would have been highly creditable to a strong man in full contact with all the sources of current information. For a sick woman living alone with her niece in a Westmorland village it was an astonishing triumph of natural capacity over the disabilities of her position, her health and her sex. She had every excuse for supposing that if women were fit to do the work of men there would be no serious obstacles in their path, for her own career seemed to prove the case beyond the possibility of dispute. Limited as she was to gaining her knowledge from books, newspapers and correspondence, she kept herself by these means so entirely abreast of the tide of opinion and so well informed of the course of events that she was always equipped to deal adequately with any one of half a dozen topical subjects that might present themselves for treatment. It is not surprising that W. R. Greg, who was one of her neighbours, spoke of the "really almost unrivalled innate powers" of her mind. Those powers were

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at their best in the solitude and detachment of her country home, perhaps they were none the worse for the further detachment enforced by her illness. Among living persons Harriet's judgment was liable to be swamped by her affections, but among books and newspapers she could keep her head. In addition to those unrivalled powers, she possessed, according to Greg, a force of conviction "akin to that of the fanatic or martyr" and a natural impatience "amounting to a sort of incapacity for doubt." The combination of clear and passionate conviction with an exceptionally vigorous intellect was irresistible, and no one need wonder that Harriet Martineau was a notable influence in her time.

A temporary loss of income in 1867, just after she had been obliged to give up nearly all her work, brought into action the generous affection of her friends and relatives. The period of restriction was short, and Harriet made light of the possibility of letting The Knoll and going into lodgings, a step which her brother and sister would certainly never have allowed, for the solitary attempt to take her beyond her own gates in a bath chair had been followed by such alarming symptoms that the experiment was never repeated. She was touched by many of the offers of help made to her, and particularly by one from Robinson, the editor of

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the *Daily News*, who was ready to undertake the collection and publication of a volume of the biographical sketches she had contributed to the paper. This offer she gratefully accepted, and the *Biographical Sketches* had an appreciable success which took them through three editions. Fortunately, the railway company which had suspended its dividends soon resumed payment and the remainder of Harriet Martineau's life was untroubled by any financial difficulty.

If she wrote little for publication during her last years, her mind was none the less active and to the end she kept up her reading and her correspondence with unflagging zest. She emerged into the public view again as a vigorous supporter of the agitation for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. In association with Josephine Butler and Florence Nightingale, she threw her influence and all that was left of her energy into this movement. She drafted petitions, she wrote letters, she composed popular appeals for election placards and reasoned arguments for the *Daily News*. When she was too ill to write she worked chair covers to be sold at bazaars in aid of the funds.

The offer of a Civil List pension was made to her for a third time, in 1873, by Gladstone, who had read a letter from Miss Martineau to Mrs. Grote, published in that lady's Life of her husband.

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The letter touched on her own sufferings as well as on Grote's death, and Gladstone was ready to do anything he could to relieve her if pecuniary aid could assist. But she had enough money, and she declined the offer with a reflection of her old spirit, adding to her former reasons for refusal a declaration that she had no wish to expose either the Queen or the Premier to anonymous insult for favouring an infidel like herself.

It was fortunate for Harriet and for those about her that in spite of pain and opium her mind kept its vigour to the last. She was always interested in life and always easily amusable. She liked seeing babies and ducklings, she liked talking to the doctor, she liked letters from her friends and she liked reading. Her imagination was as lively as ever. In the spring of 1874 she read *Middlemarch* for the second time and found the experience almost too poignant to be borne. "The Casaubons set me dreaming all night. Do you ever hear *anything* of Lewes and Miss Evans?" And her last letter to Atkinson, written only a few weeks before her death, ends with a postscript to tell him that "I am in a state of amazement at a discovery just made! I have read (after half a lifetime) Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*, and am utterly disappointed in it. The changes in my taste are beyond accounting for—almost beyond belief!"

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The same letter contains an account of her state of mind which shows her as entirely free from the common tendency to revert under the draining weariness of illness and before the prospect of death to the faith of an earlier stage of development. She, who had believed so fervently that she was the appointed mouthpiece of a paternal God and had expected angels to take her to heaven through the roof of the Octagon Chapel, looked at the approaching end of her life without any vision of light beyond. For her death was a seal, not a gateway.

“I have no cares or troubles,” she wrote, “beyond bodily uneasiness (which, however, I don’t deny to be an evil). I cannot think of any future as at all probable except the ‘annihilation’ from which some people recoil with so much horror. I find myself here in the universe—I know not how, whence or why. I see everything in the universe go out and disappear, and I see no reason for supposing that it is not an actual and entire death. And for *my* part I have no objection to such an extinction. I well remember the passion with which W. E. Forster said to me, ‘I had rather be damned than annihilated.’ If he once felt five minutes’ damnation, he would be thankful for extinction in preference. The truth is I care little about it any way. Now that the great event draws

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near, and that I see how fully my household expect my death pretty soon, the universe opens so widely before my view, and I see the old notions of death and scenes to follow to be so merely human—so impossible to be true, when one glances through the range of science—that I see nothing to be done but to wait, without fear or hope or ignorant prejudice, for the expiration of life. I have no wish for further experience, nor have I any fear of it. Under the weariness of illness I long to be asleep; but I have not set my mind on any state. I wonder if all this represents your notions at all. I should think it does, while yet we are aware how mere a glimpse we have of the universe and the life it contains. . . . You *may* like to know how the case looks to a friend under the clear knowledge of death being so near at hand."

Her last letter to Mrs. Chapman, written less than a fortnight before her death and after the exhaustion of an attack of bronchitis, is equally clear and characteristic, mainly devoted to comments on Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, which she had just read. She went on reading new books and talking about them to her niece and her companion and the doctor until within a few days of the end, when she sank into semi-consciousness. She died peacefully on the 27th of June, a fortnight after her seventy-fourth birthday.

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On the 29th, Florence Nightingale wrote to Harriet's niece Jane: "The shock of your tidings to me, of course, was great; but oh, I feel how delightful the surprise to her! How much she must know now, how much she must have enjoyed already! I do not know what your opinions are about this; I know what hers were, and for a long time I have thought how great will be the *surprise to her.*"

But of the nature of the surprise we have no authentic tidings.

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THE following letter, entitled *The Early Days of Harriet Martineau*, was published in the *Daily News*, December 30th, 1884.

SIR,—Towards the end of December, 1871, you permitted my late sister, Harriet Martineau, to relieve her father's memory, by correction in your columns, of an imputation (of having failed in business) erroneously cast upon it in Lord Brougham's Autobiography. You will grant me, I am sure, a similar facility in order to clear her mother's memory from the injurious effects of some misstatements made in Mrs. Fenwick Miller's recent volume in the “Eminent Women Series.” It is the more incumbent on me to ask this favour as I am named, in general terms, by the biographer as one of her authorities, especially for the early life, in the account of which I find particulars for which I must disclaim responsibility. It is far from my wish to criticise Mrs. Miller's performance of her literary task. I have no doubt that she has diligently collected and honestly elaborated her available materials. And the result is

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that in the end the chief figure stands out with a truth of outline and portraiture more nearly exact than can be found in any previous sketch. My sister's brave conquest of difficulties, her marvellous industry and productiveness at a high average level of literary excellence, the noble integrity of her aims, the prudence by which her enthusiasms earned the right to be generous, her trust in all righteous causes, her cheerful patience in suffering, and her affectionate fidelity to the dependent and weak within her reach, receive just, yet not undiscriminating, recognition from her biographer.

Among the secondary actors on the scene, my mother is the most frequently present and essential, and the part attributed to her needs much correction, with regard to (1) the period of childhood; (2) the engagement to Mr. Worthington; (3) my sister's removal to London for her literary work. For the first, I can appeal to no record but the unwritten story of my own memory. In the other two, my recollections are checked and supplemented by copious correspondence with all the persons concerned. I cannot ask on behalf of mere autobiographical recollections for the full confidence which the *litera scripta* must claim. I will only say, therefore, that having talked them over with my youngest sister Ellen (Mrs. Alfred Higginson), I find them confirmed by her, and

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will give them in brief for what they may be worth.

In conversation with Mrs. Miller I tried to modify the preconception which she had evidently formed of my mother in her Norwich home, apparently without success. To the reader of the biography she is presented as of "little warmth of temperament" (p. 2), as "imperious" and "stern" (2, 6), as "maintaining a reserve of demeanour," as exercising a "severe despotism" and "arbitrary rule" (6, 7), as chargeable with "habitual injustice" (8); nay (under the mask of Mrs. Proctor in the *Crofton Boys*), as frightening everyone into "the habit of hiding tears" from "one who rarely shed them herself" (9). In not one of these descriptive phrases can I recognise any truth at all; and of others, less severe but similar, I find few that are free from exaggeration. Thus presented, the whole image of that venerated personality wavers between caricature and fiction. It is true that her understanding was clear, and her will, with a duty once in sight, not to be diverted; but behind these, and giving them their direction, was an inexhaustible force of affection; and not behind them only, but glowing through them into her expressive features and fervent words. A slight and delicate portrait of her is before me, from the pencil of a young artist friend who had

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an eye to read her truly; and no one can fail to see that its calm dignity is but the momentary composure of a countenance moulded by emotion, and often tremulous with pity and with love. Of this matron who rarely wept, my sister Ellen remarked to me, "Never did I know anyone more prone to tears at the touch of sympathy or grief," supporting the remark by a characteristic instance which I must not stay to recite. This quickness of feeling extended, no doubt, to her temper, so far as to render her displeasure at wrong emphatic, and to warn us also, if we did not wish to be laughed at, to do nothing awkward or stupid under her eye. But it secured no less the praise of well-doing, and a bright response to whatever was generous and noble.

That my sister Harriet's childhood and my own had but a cheerless look in retrospect is easily explained by causes not within the parental control. Neither of us was physically robust, and she was hindered in her development and kept low in spirits by an inert digestion and languid vitality. Yet, as she was not a conscious or a recognised invalid, the same things were naturally expected of her as of others of the same age; and the elder sisters, who shared in the guardianship of the younger children, would naturally treat any gaucherie in her as it had been treated in themselves at her

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age, and would be permitted to do so; while all that compensated it and was ultimately to transcend and eclipse their superior tact or riper judgment was still latent in her—its time had not yet come. In my own childhood, whatever was unhappy was due, so far as I remember it, not to my mother, but to myself, or to the well-meant teasings of older brothers, or to the tyranny of a large public school. Though never encouraging petty complaints, she was the sure refuge when these things became too bad to be borne in silence.

That in our early home the parents were so “cruel” as to “starve the emotions” in their children by “lack of tenderness in manner or feeling,” (3, 4) I can in no wise admit as a characteristic of that particular household, though the allegation would have a certain amount of truth if turned into a general description of the prevailing habit of the time. In old Nonconformist families especially, the Puritan tradition and the reticence of a persecuted race had left their austere impress upon speech and demeanour unused to be free; so that in domestic and social life there was enforced, as a condition of decorum, a *retenue* of language and deportment strongly contrasting with our modern effusiveness. But in the process of change to more genial ways that Norwich home was in advance of the average movement rather than behind; and in

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few others have I found the medium better observed between the opposite danger of bidding high for profession of enthusiasm and quenching its reality by coldness and derision. That this impression of mine is not due to the mere golden haze which is apt to suffuse a distant past is evidenced by the fresher memories of my sons and daughters, themselves brought up in the freer air of the new age. Of their grandmother—a near neighbour through their childhood—they have only delightful recollections, as overflowing with sympathy, the brightest and most versatile of companions, a visit to whom was always welcomed by them, and never hurried to an end.

By thus removing the alleged cause of my sister's unhappiness in childhood, do I bind myself to find another? If I do not misconstrue a class of facts frequently noticed, there are natures—and among them some of the most energetic and gifted in the end—which remain through childhood in a kind of *chrysalis* state; and first begin to quiver with their intended life, and at length break forth upon the wing in the second half of their second decade. As that is also the time when young people often leave the early nest for some new experience, bringing them into contact with fresh types of character and manners, the change of scene is apt to get all the credit of the marvellous hues and

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vivid flight now taken by the creature once so colourless and dull. But the metamorphosis would not be wrought upon a brother or sister differently tempered. It is essentially the unfolding of an inward nature reserved for this birth-hour, on the stroke of which it eagerly seizes on the relations which crowd in upon it from the novel elements around. Such, I believe, was the case with my late sister; and the attempt to make her home and her mother responsible for the delay of her brilliant characteristics is for the most part illusory.

A portion of Mrs. Miller's information was derived, it seems, from a witness whom she thus describes :—“ Mr. —— was the husband of a lady who had been reared from early childhood by Mrs. Martineau, having been adopted by her simply in order to provide her little daughter Ellen, who was nine years younger than Harriet, with a child-companion somewhat about her own age. This lady, her widowed husband tells me, retained always a most warm admiration and affection for Mrs. Martineau. Mothers who have brought up eight children of their own can appreciate the self-devotedness of this mother in receiving a ninth child by adoption in order to increase the well-being of her own little daughter ” (6, 7).

My sister Ellen, in common with myself, being utterly at a loss for the meaning of this extra-

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ordinary fiction (for such it is), an inquiry was addressed to Mrs. Miller as to its origin. By mentioning the name of her informant, she threw an interpreting light upon it at once. My sister Ellen shall tell the story for me, in the words of a recent note received from her. “The first wife of — (the ‘widower’ in question) was a Sunday scholar of Rachel’s, of the name of Crane, who became our plain housemaid—an excellent, humble-minded, but quite common girl, older than myself, and who had nothing to do with me. She adored the memory of her mistress, and to the end attributed all the good that was in her to my mother’s teaching.”

Proceeding to the second stage of this biography, I have to show how, by transformation of dates and facts, the episode of my sister’s engagement to my friend, John Hugh Worthington, is told in a way which does wrong, certainly to my mother and myself, and probably to his family. The errors which I must correct I by no means intend to charge upon Mrs. Miller. My object being simply to substitute a true story for a perverted one, I make no attempt to apportion the mistakes which I find between her sources and herself. The tale, as related, stands essentially thus :

In 1822, during a fortnight’s vacation visit of my fellow-student to me at Norwich, there sprang

up between him and my sister an attachment which was looked upon with favour by her father and mother, but resisted by me, and was hence not permitted to become an engagement. There is indeed another reason given why the relation was thus held in suspense, viz. that my friend, supposing our family to be wealthy, honourably refrained from anything which might commit her to an unequal match. This motive, however, would withhold him not simply from the final declaration and betrothal, but just as much from the prior steps which invited and enlisted her affection. Yet it is evidently implied that the love was not only consciously mutual but so openly avowed as to be the subject of discussion between the parents and the brother. Mainly, therefore, or exclusively, through my “strong aversion,” “an affection which should have brought only joy became, in fact, to Harriet the cause of sorrow, suspense, and anxiety” (33); and to Worthington a “long doubt and suspense,” “which worked unfavourably upon his nervous system,” and helped to bring on in the end a fatal “brain fever” (53). This cruel strain lasted, it is said, till 1826, when my father’s death, disclosing a reduced state of the family fortunes, set Worthington free to turn his suit into an engagement. Within five months, his pastoral labours in Manchester were arrested by a fearful illness,

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prostrating body and mind. He was taken home to Leicester to be nursed: on the physician there recommending that Harriet should come to him, Mrs. Worthington wrote to urge this experiment, and my sister entreated her mother to let her go. She was peremptorily refused and obeyed. “She did not defy her mother and go” (53). Then followed terrible weeks of doubt and storm, between her love and her obedience dragging her different ways. “Worthington died, and left her to a life of heart-widowhood, darkened by this shadow of arbitrary separation to the last” (54).

To turn this recital into history, the elements of the drama must be recast. From the letters of my mother, my sister Harriet, and Worthington himself—all of which I have read afresh in order to check my own recollections—I redispone the incidents thus.

In August 1823, at the end of my first college session, my new friend Worthington (who was two years in advance of me) visited us at Norwich. When his fortnight ended, he left us, all no doubt full of affectionate memories of him, for there was a play of delicate light and pious purity about him which was very winning; but there was no trace of any exceptional relation between him and my sister; certainly no idea of such a thing in my thoughts, and no speech of it, so far as I ever heard,

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on the part of my father and mother. Worthington's letters, when in absence from me, and my sister's when I was at college (with him as companion for two years more), were constant, voluminous, and avowedly the unreserved outpouring of their inmost hearts. Yet, beyond an inclusive message of "kind remembrances," neither correspondent ever alludes to the other. Nay, in one or two of his letters, Worthington, after the manner of college intimates, speculates on the question whether he shall determine to marry, and, if he does, what graces and excellences he must deem indispensable to satisfy his conception of domestic life; and the ideal is plainly not drawn from my sister's characteristics. These particular letters were subsequent to his ministerial settlement in Manchester; and for nine months out of the twelve in two preceding years we had lived in adjacent rooms at college, on terms of the most confidential friendship; had studied together, walked together, and established together a daily habit of mutual confession and joint guardianship of the springs of the inward life. Yet when, in August 1826, he wrote to me the news of his visit to Norwich and engagement to my sister, it came upon me as a surprise; and his letter announcing it distinctly proves that he did not expect me to be prepared for it. The whole, therefore, of three or four years of resisted and suspended love is a baseless dream.

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The illness which carried him off, induced, it was thought, by the stress of a position too responsible for so sensitive a conscience, commenced with December, 1826, and spent its most terrible force upon him, during more than three months, in his lodgings at Manchester. It was not “brain fever,” though often called so from the attendant delirium. About the 12th of March, 1827, he was able to be removed to his father’s house at Leicester; and eager watch was kept to see whether, the physical malady (a succession of carbuncles) having subsided, the mental disturbance would clear itself away. In both stages of the attack, my sister had been urged to go to him; from Manchester, by a medical cousin of his upon the spot; from Leicester (through the same advice), by his mother. With regard to the former request, her reply to a friend’s anxious question is, “I never had an idea of going to Manchester.” The latter, she herself, with her usual decision, determined to refuse; but (on the grounds often mentioned at this time and referred to afterwards, “I know not how it is, I cannot write letters”) she asked my mother to be her secretary; who accordingly reports to me at the same date, “Our dear Harriet has formed her determination respecting the future and empowered me to write her decision.” And Harriet herself says: “Did you not know that John Hugh W. was at Leicester? He was there when I sent my

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final determination." "The day after my final letter was sent I had one from A." (his sister), "the purpose of which was to beg me *not* to go to Leicester" (the patient being in no fit state). Thus my mother's concern with the reply was merely that of an amanuensis, and it was not true that she "stood between her full-grown daughter and the bed of a dying betrothed" (68).

To the Worthington family the shock of this disappointment was greatly increased by my sister's characteristic eagerness to put an end to all surprise at once. She had said a month before that she "feared death less than recovery, for in that case her path of duty might not be quite so clear." A week ago, on the report of a somewhat quieter state of things, her hopes still showed some flickering light. But now, the mental disorder persisting when the bodily malady is relieved, she made up her mind that the engagement must drop; and, in order to act immediately on her perception of right, she announced her dissolution of the tie in the same letter which declined the Leicester journey. That this untimely combination should produce some hurt feeling is not surprising. But of the alleged "insults" received in consequence there is no trace in the correspondence of the period; nor can I impute to the Leicester family even a transient attention to silly rumours of Harriet's treachery to

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her betrothed. After my friend's death in May 1827, I wrote myself to his father, in the hope of re-establishing happier relations between the two families affected by a common sorrow; and his reply gives no hint of any grievance behind the letter so unfortunately abrupt. In four years more, if not earlier, the cloud of misunderstanding had cleared away, and I find my sister expressing her satisfaction in pleasant intercourse with Miss Worthington, personally and by letter.

I trust that this narrative will relieve both my mother and the Leicester family of the unmerited opprobrium with which they have been visited in connection with a tragic episode in my sister's life. It is with intense repugnance that I have entered into details which should not be dragged from the shelter of private life. But when once they have been thrown out for public inspection, it is needful to present them in their true order and relations.

Finally, the story of my sister Harriet's removal to London in prosecution of her literary designs contains, as related by her new biographer, some apocryphal elements which I must point out.

Her first powerful and stimulating encouragement was received from Mr. W. J. Fox, to whose *Monthly Repository* she contributed many papers, marked by a vigour of thought and freshness of manner which he well knew how to appreciate.

He was of opinion, freely expressed to her, that, if the pen was to be the instrument of her life-work, she should be, partially or wholly, resident in London; and “she wrote,” we are told, “to inform her mother of this fact.” The result is thus described: “The mother who had stood between her full-grown daughter and the bed of a dying betrothed, now thought herself justified in interposing between the woman of twenty-seven and the work which she desired to undertake for her independence. Mrs. Martineau sent Harriet a stern letter peremptorily ordering her to return home forthwith. Bitterly disappointed at seeing this chance of independence in the vocation she loved thus snatched away, Harriet’s sense of filial duty led her to obey her mother’s commands. She went home with a heavy heart; and with equal sadness her little sister of eighteen turned out of home at the same despotic bidding to go a-governessing” (68–69).

The reader, I presume, here pictures to himself two acts of coercion, simultaneous or immediately consecutive, exchanging the older for the younger sister as the resident at home. To take the case of the “little sister” first: the date of the alleged “stern letter” of recall “forthwith” to Harriet was in the third week of January 1830. The first idea of my sister Ellen’s going out as a governess

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arose in the following May, and was then reported to me in a letter from Harriet herself, with perfect sympathy and approbation, as the result of a family council, and an obvious necessity under the delayed winding-up of the business affairs. It was not, however, to be immediate. “Ellen,” she says, “will want a situation in September.” And in the autumn accordingly the dear little victim went into the family of Mr. Nightingale, with the trepidation, no doubt, of a modest and earnest conscience on first assuming a grave trust, but with cheerful free-will, and resolute welcome of a duty from which exemption would have been intolerable to her.

As to Harriet’s sufferings and submission under the same “despotic bidding,” I will allow her to speak for herself. While staying at Stamford Hill and seeing Mr. Fox every day, she wrote to me the following account of the facts, on January 26, 1830: “He is bent on my coming to live in the neighbourhood of town, for the sake of the advantages which I cannot, and indeed need not, detail to you. He wrote to my mother about it; and in consequence (leaving home being utterly out of the question) she is kind enough to propose that I shall spend three months or so every year in this neighbourhood; and she advises me to remain for three months at present instead of proceeding

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to Derby, etc. I know she is right." And in or near London, accordingly, Harriet continued, by my mother's encouragement, far beyond the specified three months, in high activity and an enjoyment which became my mother's at second-hand and is reflected from the letters of both. This habitual sympathy and consideration for her she was not slow to acknowledge. "My mother," she says, "who always forgets herself, when she can afford me any indulgence, says she does not want me at all; but I am unwilling to prolong my absence." In such competition of affection, my mother usually managed to prevail; and my sister accepted her leave of absence till July. So much for the peremptory order to come home.

In all her literary designs my mother was her chief confidant, of whose sympathy she was more sure than even of my own. Speaking of her projected *Traditions of Palestine* when not beyond the unfinished MS. stage, she says: "I have not told even my own family, except my mother, and meant to have taken you by surprise with the advertisement; but I cannot bear to delay my confidence in you." Only of her paper on "The Education of the Human Race" does she say: "This has been a secret, even from my mother." "My midnight musings on Providence, while writing these essays, have left a permanent impression of peace and joy.

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I shall always look back to that time (last February) as an era of my life. It was amusing and very pleasant to us at Dalston to know what an interest my mother and others took in them without the slightest suspicion of the writer."

From the time of Mr. Fox's letter, my mother had become intent, with the good sister-in-law whose lot was bound up with her own, on removing to London and giving Harriet, in place of mere lodgings, the shelter of a natural home, with rooms and arrangements adequately providing for her independent pursuits and society. For awhile she was not free. Three years after my father's death, the estate, now under my brother Henry's management, was judged by him to be no longer solvent. The creditors, when called together, found that on the liabilities, amounting to £100,000, fifteen shillings in the pound would be covered by the assets, and payable in three equal instalments, if my brother was left to wind up the affairs in his own way. The family property had been left in the business, to share the fate of the trade creditors; and till the final dividend was paid, the Norwich house could not be quitted, or the furniture set free. As the assets were chiefly in goods scattered over the world, the balances of which could not come in till the foreign creditors had themselves paid twenty shillings in the pound, delays took

place, and kept my mother lingering in the old home. For two years, therefore, the arrangement continued for my sister to divide the months between Norwich and London. But in August 1833, a house in Fludyer Street (at the back of Downing Street, in the Westminster of that day !) was taken, which became my mother's home for seven years, and for six the scene of her daughter's indefatigable industry and brilliant society. And so was fulfilled the wish which, two and a half years before, she had declared to be her only one : "If I dared look forwards to our removing to London by and by, I should have no anxiety about the future."

Thus completely transformed becomes the passage of domestic history which Mrs. Miller adduces as her crowning example of maternal severity. The initiative was taken, not by my sister but by Mr. Fox. The effect of his letter was not an instant end to her absence, but an extension of it to six months, a proposal for its annual renewal, and a determination to provide her, by a not distant family removal, with a settled home in London; and each step of the plan was duly carried out. When related in the fresh language of the actors themselves, while the events were passing, the story presents the personal relations between mother and daughter under a very different aspect from

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that which the biographer imagines. I am well aware that, for want of adequate and unimpeachable sources, it was not in her power to avoid misapprehensions. But however innocently incurred may be the errors of her book, I cannot be silent while my true and tender-hearted mother—a woman of rare capacity, nobleness and wisdom—is held up to the world as a stately and tearless despot, pitiless to the loves and griefs of younger lives and heedless of the wants and aspirations of larger minds. A nature less narrow and rigid I have rarely found, while, at the same time, secured so finely against airiness and extravagance. Her very impatiences were against stupidities and wrongs, and her sympathies open and flexible to new admirations, to new thoughts, to new virtues, whenever they sought her intelligence. Both the charm of her personality and its imperfections were the expression, not of a hard and cold, but of a pathetic and impulsive nature, capable, no doubt, of anger, but gleaming with humour and compassion. When I say that Burns was the poet of her heart, and that she would repeat his lines with a mellow and racy simplicity whose tones ring in my memory to this hour, does not this sufficiently hint the inmost secret of her character, and render incredible the fiction of her iron rule and merciless conscience?

I would gladly pass in silence Mrs. Miller's

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account of my sister's alienation from me after my review of *The Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development*, did not silence seem to imply that I accept that account as fair and adequate. It is said of me: "He reviewed the book in such terms that all intercourse between him and his sister was thenceforward at an end. They had long drifted apart in thought, but this final separation was none the less felt as a wrench. Dr. Martineau's attack was almost exclusively aimed against Mr. Atkinson. But with Harriet's loyalty of nature she was more impelled to resent what was said about her friend and colleague than if it had been directed against herself. The brother and sister never met nor communicated with each other again" (163).

Notwithstanding the cautious wording of this passage, the reader, I suppose, will receive the impression that the "terms" of the review so violated the rules of fair controversy as to warrant, or even demand, a complete breach with the writer. If Mrs. Miller, having read the paper, thinks so, she is perfectly right to speak out her opinion; and I have no more to say on this point than that I have repeatedly, in distrust of my self-judgment, sought the sincere opinion of competent reasoners on both sides of the questions at issue, not as to the conclusiveness, but as to the fairness of that article, and not one has failed to acquit me of all polemical

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offence. And so the *North American Review* in noticing the paper says: "As so large a part of the letters is pervaded with denunciations of bigotry which will not hear the other side of a question, and filled with admiration of those who prefer truth to the ties of kindred, friendship, and old association, we should have thought that Miss Martineau would have rejoiced in having a brother who could say 'Amica Harriet, sed magis amica veritas.' Not at all. It was evident that he had said nothing about herself at which she could take offence; but in speaking against her philosophy and her new philosopher he had committed the unpardonable sin" (No. 256, May 1877, p. 448). "Attack against Mr. Atkinson" there was none, unless the citing of his own lucubrations in the *Zoist* constitutes such a thing. All the rest was simply argument for argument, amenable to intellectual criticism, but, so far as I am aware, meriting no moral reproach.

My sister's altered mood towards me was less sudden, and less due to divergent opinions than her biographer supposes. Many years before she had required all her correspondents to destroy her letters, under penalty, for noncompliance, of never receiving any more. After vain remonstrance, I had told her that if I must choose between unknown future communications and the inestimable treasures

of the past, my decision must be to keep what I had as memorials of a life-drama else fading and lost, and to guard them as hitherto from misuse. Though her threat was not at first executed to the utmost, her letters, alas! became notes, ever fewer and more far between, limited to matters of fact, comparatively dry and cold, till they totally ceased a few years before the appearance of the Atkinson letters. As we could scarcely ever personally meet, she had thus virtually cut me off by a preliminary minor excommunication; so nearly complete, indeed, that I never even heard of the major which followed till, after many months of reverberation, it fell upon me in the echoes of rumour from several directions at once. I was not conscious, I am not conscious, of having deserved it; nor could I ever see why the old relation of affectionate appreciation should be less maintainable than between the two brothers Newman, after one of them had submitted to the Pope, while the other had become the apostle of Theism. Great changes of thought, like these, must, of course, seriously narrow the immediate ground of possible sympathy; but, besides the common sincerity and loyalty to conscience, there remains the fellowship of tender memories, of joint enthusiasms, of identical friendships, and of not a few admirations and duties uncontroverted still. Hence, I never reciprocated

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the alienation from which I suffered, and should have escaped a real sorrow had the efforts to remove it been successful. It has simply counted for me as an instance more of my sister's liability to oscillate between extremes of devotedness and antipathy, and has in no way disenchanted the old affection, or impaired my estimate of her high aims, her large powers, and her noble and patient virtues.

I am, Sir, yours, etc.,

JAMES MARTINEAU.

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1. *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. VIII. No. 47, p. 576.

A caricature of Miss Martineau, attributed to Maclise, is accompanied by an abusive article by Maguire. In commenting on Maclise's caricature of Godwin, Harriet remarked that throughout the entire series published in *Fraser's Magazine* the Tories were exhibited to the best advantage, while Liberals were treated no better than Godwin. (*Autobiography*, I. 399.)

2. Mrs. Gilman's letter to the *Boston Transcript* was published June 13, 1877, and is headed "One of Miss Martineau's Victims."

3. The reflection of Miss Austen's manner is most noticeable at the beginning of *Deerbrook*, as will be seen from this passage from the first chapter :

"Mrs. Grey and Sophia awaited them in the drawing-room, and were ready with information about how uneasy they had all been about the rain in the morning, till they remembered it would lay the dust and so make the journey pleasanter. . . . Sophia found the first half-hour not at all difficult to surmount. She and Margaret Ibbotson informed each other of the precise number of miles between Deerbrook and Birmingham; and she had to tell

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them that her father was obliged to attend the market, some miles off, and would not be home for an hour or two."

4. In a letter to Mrs. Roebuck, early in 1842, Harriet writes: "Just for truth's sake, I lose no time in answering your concluding question, though it will have occurred to you before this that I should not have used the word 'incurable' against authority. I did see a London physician half a year since; and that was *his* word. I do not depend on that alone, however; for I have no great faith in that particular person. But it is as impossible for me to be well as for a humpbacked person to be straight again; and the influence of time must be to aggravate if anything. I always, if asked, tell the fact thus plainly."

5. An account of the treatment will be found in *Mesmeric Experiences* by Spencer T. Hall (privately printed by H. Baillière, London), pp. 63-75.

6. The articles published in the *Athenæum* (Nov. 23rd, Nov. 30th, Dec. 7th, Dec. 14th, Dec. 21st, 1844) were afterwards republished under the title *Letters on Mesmerism*. Dilke's comments appeared in the *Athenæum* for Dec. 28th. Further statements and counter-statements were published in the issues of Jan. 4th, March 15th, March 22nd, March 29th, April 5th, April 12th, 1845.

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7. "You are to know," Elizabeth Barrett writes to James Martin (Dec. 10, 1844), "that Miss Martineau's mesmeric experience is only peculiar as being Miss Martineau's, otherwise it exhibits the mere commonplace of the agency. You laugh, I see. I wish I could laugh too. I mean, I seriously wish that I could disbelieve in the reality of the power, which is in every way most repulsive to me." She goes on to speak of "the atrocious insults from you all, which Miss Martineau has to bear. But she has singular powers of mind and calmly continues her testimony." (*Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, I. 219, 220.)

Browning's incredulity was reinforced by the correspondence in the *Athenaeum*. "Understand that I do *not* disbelieve in Mesmerism—I only object to insufficient evidence being put forward as quite irrefragable. I keep an open sense on the subject—ready to be instructed; and should have refused such testimony as Miss Martineau's if it had been adduced in support of something I firmly believed—‘non tali auxilio’—indeed, so has truth been harmed, and only so, from the beginning." (*Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, I. 441.)

8. *A Medical Report of the Case of Miss H—M*—(Samuel Highley, 1845). The second edition contains copies of the correspondence which passed

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between Greenhow and Harriet Martineau previous to the publication.

9. The paternity of Harriet Martineau's friend, who is mentioned both by her and by James Payn as the son of an architect, appears to be established by reference to the Will of William Atkinson (1773-1839). Henry George was his second son. When the Will was drawn up in 1830, he was a minor, but he had attained his majority by 1837, when a codicil was added.

10. In a manuscript letter, February 12, 1927, Professor Elie Halévy writes: "Miss Martineau very happily defines the real value of her work. Of course she has prejudices . . . but the prejudices are honestly avowed and are in harmony with some of the main currents of the age."

11. *Prospective Review*, XXVI. James Martineau's account of this episode is quoted in the *Life and Letters* by J. Drummond and C. B. Upton, Vol. I. pp. 222-9, where will also be found some critical comments on his statement.

12. The account of Harriet Martineau's illness given by Mrs. Fenwick Miller in the *Life* published in 1884 makes no reference to the communications published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1876 and 1877. Mrs. Miller states (p. 220) that "The internal tumour (was) an entirely different kind of thing from that which she suffered from at

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Tynemouth. . . . The post-mortem examination made by her medical attendant at the request of her executors, two days after she died, revealed the fact that this tumour was the true cause of all her sufferings. She never knew it herself. Relying on the statement of the eminent men whom she consulted in 1855, that it was the heart that was affected, she accepted that as her fate."

The views of the medical profession respecting Harriet Martineau's illnesses and the cause of her death are to be found in the *British Medical Journal*. The following are the most important communications :

- (1) *The Late Miss Harriet Martineau.* By Sir Thomas Watson, July 8, 1876.
- (2) *Termination of the Case of Miss Harriet Martineau.* By T. M. Greenhow, April 14, 1877, p. 449.
- (3) *The Late Miss Harriet Martineau.* By Sir Thomas Watson, April 21, 1877, p. 496.
- (4) *Remarks on the Case of Miss Martineau.* By T. Spencer Wells, May 5, 1877, p. 543.
- (5) *The Case of Miss Harriet Martineau.* By W. Moore King, May 5, 1877, p. 550.

The first letter from Sir Thomas Watson is intended to refute the charge that the medical profession had misled Miss Martineau as to the

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nature of her illness in 1855, and to establish the fact that he had himself assured her that her heart was not diseased and that Dr. Latham must have expressed a similar opinion. His second letter states that Dr. Latham had told him that "after the cure by mesmerism of Miss Martineau's abdominal tumour had been proclaimed, the tumour remained as large and palpable as ever. Dr. Latham supposed that it might in its progress have shifted its position, and that relief from the distress it had formerly produced might thus have been obtained. . . . The very interesting communication from Dr. Thomas M. Greenhow on the same subject, contained in the last number of your Journal, establishes the correctness of Dr. Latham's report."

The remaining communications deal with the results of the post-mortem examination made by Mr. W. Moore King, who had been in attendance on Miss Martineau from 1871. He reported that she was then in fair health and working hard on correspondence. Her heart was weak, "but there was no murmur." Mr. King was not permitted to make any special examination of the abdomen, but was convinced that it contained a large tumour. "Miss Martineau attributed the swelling to enlargement of the heart, displacing all the other organs. The practice of opium-taking had become habitual to the patient . . . to the extent of from twelve

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to fifteen grains daily." The post-mortem examination disclosed the presence of a large tumour which had displaced several of the abdominal organs and reduced the cavity of the thorax. Death was due to the failure of the heart's action, which had been weakening for about eighteen months.

Sir Spencer Wells, at the request of Harriet Martineau's brother-in-law, Mr. Alfred Higginson, outlined the complete history of the case to the members of the Clinical Society of London on April 27, 1877. After showing that the slow-growing dermoid cyst from which she suffered was ovarian in its origin, he stated that in view of Mr. King's report, he had no doubt that it was the same tumour which had been observed by Dr. Greenhow and Sir Charles Clarke at Tynemouth, and incorrectly diagnosed as uterine. "So long as it was in the pelvis it led to great suffering; and its rise from the pelvis into the abdomen, which happened to coincide with mesmeric treatment, was followed by great temporary relief—the supposed cure of the tumour by mesmerism, which was so triumphantly proclaimed." The subsequent growth was very slow and led to no noticeable disturbances until 1855, when Miss Martineau consulted Dr. Latham and Sir Thomas Watson about the symptoms of the supposed disease of the heart. At this point Sir Spencer Wells read to the Society a copy of the

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entry made by Sir Thomas Watson in his case-book on January 31, 1855. After describing Miss Martineau's symptoms, which included breathlessness, flutter and bump of the heart, etc., he noted "a large pear-shaped indolent tumour reaching as high as the lower part of the epigastrium." This note was the only definite account Sir Spencer Wells was able to find of an abdominal tumour during life. He concluded that after 1855 it remained without any very great increase for twenty-one years. "During most of that time, Miss Martineau's life was that of an invalid; sometimes suffering a great deal; always apprehending the result of the incurable disease of the heart under which she believed she was dying, notwithstanding the assurances of the two most distinguished physicians of the day; and, although she did a great deal of literary work, she was a source of constant anxiety to her relatives and those about her. When we see how much real good work she did under such disadvantages, and acknowledge how great were the doings of an invalid woman in comparison with what most of us who are strong and well are able to do, we must regret the more that the last twenty years of the life of this remarkable woman were not made as happy as they might have been by the removal of the cyst which was removed so easily after her death."

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